

# HANDLING YOUR RESIGNATION WITH DIGNITY AND PROFESSIONALISM

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BY DAVID A. MOLNAR

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The “high”-- you’ve gotten the job offer you wanted, you accepted it and signed on with the new company.

The “low”—you know the dreaded resignation looms ahead; and maybe even the more dreaded “exit interview.”

No phase of the recruiting process displays a wider swing of emotions than does the resignation event. From tearful good-byes to long-time friends and co-workers to angry “take-this-job-and-shove-it” type departures, the resignation can be an emotionally challenging event.

Here are some steps you can take to make this process run as smoothly as possible:

1. Resign immediately after receiving your offer. There is no magic in Friday afternoon resignations. (In fact, Friday afternoon resignations are often more emotionally trying because the supervisor may be mentally gearing down for a weekend break and it not only starts the supervisor’s weekend on a bad note but it allows two full days of time to worry about the future.) A Monday or Tuesday, late day resignation is preferable, because managers are in “take-care-of-business mode” as opposed to mentally preparing for the weekend.
2. Write a professional letter of resignation and hand it to your immediate supervisor face to face if possible (a curt, one line, “I quit” e-mail is not in your best interests. A well-written letter brings a non-emotional, professional termination to the business relationship. It signifies that the decision is final and diminishes tension by making an offer to transition as smoothly as possible. The letter should include:
  - a. The date the resignation is effective and the last date of employment.
  - b. An expression of appreciation for the time together. (“Thank you” and “I’m sorry” are emotional responses that are best left out of this letter. The more matter-of-fact, the better.)
  - c. An expression of commitment to a new organization.
  - d. An expression of willingness to make a smooth transition.
3. Be thorough and fair to your employer while working your two-week notice.
  - a. Work a full day and make sure you are not distracting to other workers.
  - b. Ask your boss if you should inform current customers of your resignation or would he prefer that the company do it.
  - c. Get your files in order and make sure others can work with them.
  - d. Be extra-careful not to make any disparaging comments that would imply to other workers, “Now that I’m leaving, you ought to consider it, too.”
4. Don’t burn the bridge. Even if you have developed pent-up feelings of anger toward your company or supervisor, remember that you may need these contacts for future references, verifications of employment for mortgages, loans, etc. And since people know people, it’s always amazing to me how negative workplace emotion can come back to haunt you in the future. As stated above, it’s best to stay neutral no matter how tempting it may be to tell someone off. Here’s the kindling for bridge burning:

- a. Tell them how to “fix” their problems or make the company better.
  - b. Taking parting shots at management at a staff lunch or going away party.
  - c. Sending an e-mail resignation and not showing up to work again. Copying company files and taking them with you. In fact, you should not take any company property of any kind no matter how small it seems.
5. Maintain control during the exit interview. The company’s agenda during an exit interview is to make a final reconciliation regarding all company properties, contracts, personnel matters or legitimate matters of business that need to be handled before you leave. Your agenda needs to be one of reinforcing your decision and making a smooth transition. This is the only goal you should have in this meeting. The company, however, may also have some hidden agendas:
- a. To present a counter-offer. Accepting a counter-offer carries enormous career risk (see accompanying articles.) It is best to calmly and firmly state that a commitment has been made to the new employer and that you would like to get on with the business of making a smooth transition.
  - b. To find out where you are going to work. You should firmly state that you don’t intend to discuss your future situation, but that your decision is firm and you would like to make a smooth transition. You might want to assure them that you intend to do no business harm to them or violate the terms of any employment contract you may have had.
  - c. Find out who else is looking. Again, you should state that it would be inappropriate to discuss the feelings of other employees and that your decision was based on a deep inward analysis of your personal growth and needs. Bring the conversation back to how to make a smooth transition.

If you keep your eyes on making a smooth transition, there is not much that can go wrong during the exit interview. All other requests by the employer would not be relevant to that goal.

In summary you will feel more in control of your resignation if you remain firm about your decision, display commitment to a new opportunity and decide on a course of fairness and decency to your current employer. The resignation and exit interview need not be a dreaded event, but a time of professional transition.

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## SAMPLE RESIGNATION LETTER

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Dear Boss,

Please accept this letter as my official notice of resignation effective immediately. It is my intent to work for the next two weeks to make the transition as effective as possible for you. If you accept this two-week notice, my last day will be (date).

I appreciate the work we have been able to accomplish together at (company name), but I have now made a commitment to another organization.

Please let me know what I may do to be the most effective during the next two weeks. I am eager to leave on the most positive note possible.

Sincerely,