

## There must be 50 ways to leave your employer

By: Peggy R. Hoyt, J.D., M.B.A., B.C.S. – board certified in Wills, Trusts and Estates and Elder Law

As the Paul Simon song so aptly says, “Slip out the back Jack, make a new plan Stan, you don’t have to be coy Roy, just get yourself free.” I’m fascinated by the number of ways people leave their employers and/or end relationships, which sometimes can be one and the same.

Is there a right way or a wrong way to disengage from employment? I believe there is. I posed this question to Chuck Csizmar, CCP, Principal of the CMC Compensation Group who gave this sage advice:

“One of the safest ways to resign is to say that you're leaving for more money. Most folks do receive more compensation from their next employer, but it's seldom the reason they were looking elsewhere in the first place.

This reason is the safest because it is rarely questioned. Of course you'd want more money! You don't have to say the boss is an idiot, the job stinks, the organization is unethical or any other criticisms that might upset folks. If you stick to the more money line, the potential for awkward or probing questions is reduced.

In other words, many people lie - but with a thought of not burning any bridges with their soon-to-be previous employer. It's a small world and you never know when you'd want a good, or at least neutral reference. So the tendency is not to be too critical on your way out the door. You may need these folks later.

How to quit? Provide a letter of resignation, don't blame anyone and give plenty of notice. Keep your mouth shut with co-workers, and DO NOT accept a counter offer. Act like a professional right up to your last day. People remember that. “

Every job or career move you make is part of the foundation and/or building block of your future success. So, how you leave your employer can make or break the way that experience continues to shape the opportunities that may be available to you in the future. My dad always told me never to leave on bad terms. First, it wasn’t professional and second, it could impact my future. As a result, I’ve always tried to make a career move with a look to its strategic importance.

You should never leave a job without an appropriate notice time period. Whether the employer chooses to accept this notice is one thing, giving it is another. Polite people who have respect for their employers don’t leave without the courtesy or notice. First jobs may only require a two week notice. Career jobs require a minimum of one month notice.

Give your resignation and notice in person. Emails, phone calls and other informal ways of resigning will generally leave a bad impression and won’t get you a good recommendation for the future. If it is impossible to resign personally, then try and make the experience as personal as possible.

Here are some resignation Dos and Don'ts:

1. First be sure you really want to leave. If you quit a job and then discover you don't like your new job, you may not have the option to return. I'm always impressed by individuals who have left positions but did so in such a way that if the opportunity presented itself for that person to return, they were welcomed with open arms.
2. Weigh all the options of your potential new position against the known circumstances of your current position. Why are you leaving? Is it more money, a better opportunity, a complete career change? If you are leaving a position and don't have a new job, make sure you can manage financially for three to six months in the event it takes longer than you think to find a new position. Also, if you resign, you may not be eligible for unemployment benefits.
3. Give notice. If you have an employment contract, you should abide by its terms. If you've been a trusted team member a minimum of one month's notice would be appropriate. Under no circumstances should you give less than two weeks unless this is a bridge you are willing to burn, forever.
4. Write a resignation letter. You don't have to write a novel. Be concise, to the point and positive about the experience you had with your employer. This is not the place to burn bridges or raise grievances. If you have grievances, a more appropriate place may be in the exit interview.
5. Ask for a recommendation. If you leave on good terms, a quality recommendation can be used not only for your next position, but for future positions as well.
6. Don't overlook the details. If there are benefits you may be entitled to after your resignation, be sure and find out what they are. Likewise, if you have obligations to your employer, make sure you've met them before you leave. I once worked for an organization that required a four year commitment or I was obligated to reimburse them for my training expenses. You can bet I stayed the full four years.
7. Leave a positive lasting impression. This includes leaving your workspace in a condition better than you found it. It also means returning company property like building keys, parking passes, credit cards or other benefits that were directly related to your employment.

So, if you've got to go, remember the words of Paul Simon, "Just hop on the bus Gus, you don't need to discuss much; drop of the key Lee and get yourself free!"

Peggy R. Hoyt, J.D., M.B.A., B.C.S.  
Board certified in Wills, Trusts and Estates and Elder Law  
The Law Offices of Hoyt & Bryan, LLC  
254 Plaza Drive  
Oviedo, Florida 32765  
407-977-8080  
HoytBryan.com  
PeggyHoyt.com  
Peggy@HoytBryan.com