

# CAREER FORWARD

THE COUNTEROFFER  
DILEMMA



## THE COUNTEROFFER DILEMMA

Once you've handed in your resignation to your current employer, your company might make you a counteroffer in an attempt to entice you to stay. This is a relatively common occurrence that can lead you into a sticky situation if not handled carefully.



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However tempting a counteroffer may sound, you're best advised to think your situation through very carefully before accepting or declining. Since you most likely haven't disclosed why you're leaving, your employer can only guess as to the driving factors behind your resignation. This means that what's on the table with the counteroffer is unlikely to address all of your reasons for wanting to move on. For example, in most cases a counteroffer involves a raise or a promotion—both of which can be attractive. However, if you're leaving due to inflexible work arrangements, a lack of challenging projects, or differences between your values and those of the company, the situation isn't going to improve with a higher salary or a different job title.

Even if your present employer is willing to negotiate and meet your demands, it's important to note that, according to the National Employment Association, an astounding 80 percent of professionals who accept a counteroffer leave the company within six months.<sup>1</sup> This can be due to an employer's failure to deliver on promised changes or simply because the trust between the employee and his or her manager has diminished as a result of the earlier intention to leave the company.

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When faced with a counteroffer, consider these important points:

## A counteroffer of more money

- If your employer has offered you a salary increase, ask yourself why the company suddenly considers you more valuable. In a work environment where you're respected and valued for the work you do, you shouldn't have to announce you're leaving in order to be offered a raise.
- It may be that your employer considers it less expensive to offer you more money than to train your replacement.
- Your employer may simply be buying additional time until your replacement can be found, and that replacement may be willing to work for less money.
- It's also possible that the raise you've been offered is the same one that's due you upon your next review.
- Never use a counteroffer to renegotiate with your new employer. Doing so may negatively influence your new employer's perception of you.

## A counteroffer of additional responsibility

- If your employer offers you more responsibility, it raises the question: why are you suddenly deemed capable of taking on more?
- If offered a promotion, it could be that your present employer wants to appease you but isn't able to provide the interesting and/or challenging work you're looking for.

## Diminished credibility

- Even if your current employer makes a counteroffer, your manager may have felt betrayed when you announced your decision to leave. And when there's a loss of trust between manager and employee, it's hard to gain it back. As a result, your chances of promotion may be diminished down the road.
- Accepting a counteroffer will negatively impact your prospective employer. When you accept a counteroffer, you've

wasted their time by giving mixed signals with regard to your intentions—trust is lost, and you probably won't be considered for future opportunities with that employer.

- Your recruiter, and anyone else who helped you secure the new position, may also feel slighted and may be less likely to help you in the future.

Just remember that you began your job search for very specific reasons and a counteroffer may not address your key issues. Remember that there are risks with any path you choose but when it makes sense, don't be afraid to stand firm and graciously decline a counteroffer—and embrace the new opportunity you've earned for yourself.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/20140318114519-10999323-counteroffers-should-i-stay-or-should-i-go>  
<http://www.forbes.com/sites/lisaquast/2014/07/07/why-you-should-never-accept-a-counter-offer-when-you-resign/>

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