

So, You Decided to Quit Your Job! Now What?

By Kimberly Schneiderman

March 21, 2007

First, congratulations on making a tough decision! Regardless of your reason for leaving your current position, there are several steps you can take to retain your professional reputation and exit gracefully.

Before you give notice:

- Delete personal and/or embarrassing emails and documents from your email account and computer. There is no reason someone should be able to read the intimate details of your Super Bowl party, and it could serve to your detriment if you ever need a recommendation from this employer.
- Take an inventory of the personal items in your desk and office. If you are asked to leave immediately upon giving notice, you will want to make sure the company ships you all of your belongings. You can start taking some things home, but be careful! Nothing says "I'm outta here!" more than a clean office.
- Understand your company's policy for unused vacation and sick days. Can you expect payment for the days or do you have to forego them as unpaid?
- Decide what the appropriate length of notice will be. Everyone knows the standard notice is two weeks, but if your position is complex or will require a long transition period, you should give four weeks.
- Prepare your resignation letter. Draft it like any other business correspondence. Use your own letterhead and include both the date you're writing the letter and the date of your last day on the job. You can also express appreciation for the opportunity to work at the company without going too overboard. Keep the letter simple.

After you give notice:

- Create a manual of your job duties and train/coach others in these tasks. Be open with information related to your position, your responsibilities, etc., even where you keep key records and files.
- Go over to-do lists and priorities with your supervisor. Make sure your manager understands that you're continuing to work hard in your position and are trying to make the transition as smooth as possible for the benefit of the company.
- Assist Human Resources in finding your replacement. Offer to write a job description complete with skills and experience required to be successful in the position.
- Express your desire to use this company as a reference in the future. Also, secure the personal contact information of your supervisors in case they leave the company.
- If there is an exit interview, it is not the time to bring up every wrong done to you over the past five years. Simply state that you were looking for different opportunities and found one that was too good to pass up. If you wish to give constructive feedback about the position, make sure you share your comments without emotion. Your safest bet is to be professional and say nothing that will make you (or the company) look bad.

If you are asked to leave immediately:



- Have the inventory of your desk and office ready. Ask them to send the items to you or make them available for pick up on a specific date.
- Hand over anything the company may own including your Blackberry, cell phone, keys, credit cards, and computers.
- Be respectful on the way out. Having an employee leave upon giving notice is often a business decision based on security issues, not one to be taken personally.

After you leave:

- Keep yourself available for any questions your company might have following your departure.
- If you are eligible for long-term benefits like a 401K or pension, be sure to update the benefits manager with your future contact information.
- Remember these people are part of your professional network. Stay in touch with co-workers via email and occasional lunches or coffee. Drop notes to executives on a regular basis to check-in.

Leaving a job can be a smooth experience with all sides feeling positive about the change. Or it can be the opposite, with a lot of finger pointing and disruption to operations. Your goal should be to end your employment professionally, so that if you ever needed a reference, or even wanted to apply to a position with the company in the future, you would be completely confident in doing so.

Best of luck!

Kimberly Schneiderman is owner of [City Career Services](#), a company that provides job search tools including [Resumes, Cover Letters, and Interview Workshops](#) to goal-oriented professionals at all levels and across all industries.

[Back to Job Search](#)