

19. Your Resignation: Beware the Retaliatory Strike

If your intention to make a job change is sincere, and nothing will change your decision to leave, you should still keep up your guard.

Why? Because unless you know how to diffuse your current employer's retaliation, you may end up psychologically wounded, or right back at the job you wanted to leave.

The best way to shield yourself from the inevitable mixture of emotions surrounding the act of submitting your resignation is to remember that employers follow a predictable, three-stage pattern when faced with a resignation:

Tactic #1: Your boss will express his shock. "You sure picked a fine time to leave! Who's going to finish the work we started?" he might say.

The implication is that you're irreplaceable. The company might as well ask, "How will we ever live without you?" To answer this assertion, you can reply, "If I were run over by a truck on my way to work tomorrow, I feel that somehow, this company would survive."

Tactic #2: Your boss will start to probe. "Who's the new company? What sort of position did you accept? What are they paying you?"

Here you must be careful not to disclose too much information, or appear too enthusiastic. Otherwise, you run the risk of feeding your current employer with ammunition he can use against you later, such as, "I've heard some pretty terrible things about your new company" or, "They'll make everything look great until you actually get there. Then you'll see what a sweat shop that place really is."

Tactic #3: Your boss will make you an offer to try and keep you from leaving. "You know that raise you and I were talking about a few months back? Well, I forgot to tell you: We were just getting it processed yesterday."

To this you can respond, "Gee, today you seem pretty concerned about my happiness and well-being. Where were you yesterday, before I announced my intention to resign?"

It may take several days for the three stages to run their course, but believe me, sooner or later, you'll find yourself engaged in conversations similar to these. More than once, candidates have called me after they've resigned, to tell me that their old company followed the three-stage pattern exactly as I described it. Not only were they better prepared to diffuse a counteroffer attempt, they found the whole sequence to be almost comical in its predictability.