**Counter-Offers: Buyer Beware!!**

Few things in the employment search are as fraught with danger as the dreaded counter-offer. Why? Well, it always comes at the tail-end after the candidate has accepted a new position and is advising her boss of the resignation. It usually happens suddenly, with long overdue words of praise and promises to make things better. Frequently the soon-to-be former employee is hearing for the first time how extremely valuable she is to the department. The temptation to stay in the nest can be overpowering. And it is VERY dangerous. Here is some advice to consider before heading down that road.

**Handling a Counter-Offer**

Many companies, as a matter of policy, will make a counter-offer to retain a departing employee. On the surface it may seem flattering but here are nine important business issues to consider:

1. What type of company do you work for if you have to ‘threaten’ to resign before they suddenly pay you what you’re really worth all along?
2. Where is this ‘new’ money coming from? Is it just your next salary increase early? Will your next review be sacrificed at the altar of ‘parity’ to preserve departmental budgets?
3. You may be the victim of an almost immediate search (however ‘quiet’) to replace you with someone more ‘loyal’ at a lower salary. You may become just an interim employee… without knowing it and after having been assured of your value to the company.
4. You have already alerted your boss of an intention to leave the company. From this day forward, relationships are changed and your loyalty is always in question.
5. The same circumstances that created your desire to move on will undoubtedly resurface in the future. The process will start all over again… but the next opportunity, if one comes, could reflect a changing market and a reduced scope. It is a big gamble to reject a great offer only to find you are stuck with the same unpalatable circumstances – only then realizing that your counter-offer is actually restricting you from advancement.
6. Statistics show an alarming trend. If you accept a counter-offer, the probability of voluntarily leaving in six (6) months doubles, and the likelihood of being terminated in less than a year triples!!
7. Accepting a counter-offer is an insult to your intelligence and a blow to your personal pride. You know you’ve been bought. And…
8. Your present employer knows he just *bought* you. You’re impressed with your negotiating skill. He isn’t. You submitted a letter of resignation and allowed him to talk you out of it. He feels you are weak and can’t stand behind your decisions. He thinks it was just a ploy to increase your salary. He knows that people who can’t make decisions can’t manage.
9. When word gets out, your relationship with co-workers will never be the same. It’s likely the camaraderie and peer acceptance is gone.

The greatest irony of considering a counter-offer is that there is no gain, only loss. Not accepting, however, translates into zero downside risk and 100% upside potential. You get to embark on an exciting new career, coupled with all the benefits you originally set as parameters for change.

**Emotional Gymnastics**

Let’s face it. When someone quits, it is a direct reflection on the boss. It’s never about the food in the company cafeteria, the parking spot that’s too far from your office, the vacation policy, or the fact that you missed a nephew’s 11th birthday party. No. Research shows that people leave companies because of their direct boss. And he’ll do what he needs to in order to stop that from happening. He wants to keep you until *he’s ready* for you to leave. He knows about the fear of the unknown (new job) and he’ll press those buttons to keep you safe in the nest.

***What’s Going Through His Mind…***

* “This couldn’t happen at a worse time for me.”
* “This is one of my best people and her departure will wreak havoc on my work schedule.”
* “I already am short one person, I don’t need this now.”
* “This will screw up the vacation schedule big time.”
* “I can’t really do her work, so the company might lose me over this.”
* “My review is coming up and this will make me look bad.”
* “I can’t stand dealing with HR and talking to recruiters again.”

***What The Boss Might Say…***

* “I’m really shocked. I thought you were as happy with us as we are with you. Let’s discuss this again tomorrow before you make your final decision.”
* “I’ve been meaning to tell you about the great plans we have for you but it’s been confidential until just this morning.”
* “The VP has you in mind for some exciting and expanded responsibilities.”
* “Your new raise was scheduled to go into effect next quarter, but we’ll make it effective immediately.”
* “You’re going to work for who!?”

**Final Thoughts**

Career changes, like any new venture into unknown territory, are tough. It’s human nature to crave the known and the safe. But before you succumb to a counter-offer consider:

* Your reasons for wanting to leave still exist. Any promises and improvements will likely be short-term only.
* The counter-offer was only made in response to your threat to leave. What will you have to do next time?
* Well-managed companies don’t make counter-offers… EVER. Their policies are fair and they won’t be coerced by what they may perceive as blackmail. What does it say about your company if they counter-offer?

**If the urge to accept a counter-offer hits … keep cleaning out your desk while counting your blessings!**