

Take This Job and Shove It.... Or Should You? A Few Things to Think About Before You Resign

Johnny Paycheck's country song from 1970's, *Take This Job and Shove It*, probably expresses the feelings of a lot people who quit jobs or have left bosses they really disliked. In fact it may be something that a lot of people have dreamt about; the opportunity to tell a boss off once and for all followed by a grand, triumphant exit. Perhaps a band plays or the *Chariots of Fire* theme music kicks in as you sprint to the parking lot, but slow down and rewind back to reality.

Just how do you want to leave your job? What should you consider? Resigning isn't easy, even if you hate your job or your boss. There are many good reasons to do it professionally and diplomatically. Things to consider are discussed below.

Are you sure you want to go?

Pause and take a step back. Are you acting too quickly? Do you really know what you are in for at your next job? Have you attempted to fix any current job problems with an action plan or a discussion with your boss? If you don't have a new job are you sure you have the means to survive until you get one? Consider all the options.

Give notice.

Check your employee handbook to determine the notice period at your organization. If you've got an employment contract, check its notice requirements. Notice requirements are typically 2-3 weeks.

Write a letter of resignation.

Letters are certainly not required but they are professional. They should be short, note that you are leaving, and provide the date of your resignation. If possible, they should say something positive about the organization, the boss, or the job. Avoid criticisms and don't bad mouth. Don't make it personal, include a Thank you, and if it's true, regrets about leaving. Sign it.

Submit your letter of resignation in person.

While different circumstances may require varying approaches, it's often good to meet with your boss. Tell him/her you are leaving and discuss any related issues.

Be prepared for the termination discussion with your boss.

It's smart to think about what you'll say (and won't say) when you tell your boss you are leaving.

A couple of things to think about include:

- A. Your boss may not have you work through the full notice period.
- B. Your boss may ask you to work longer than the notice period or to work an alternate schedule to get things in order before you leave. Consider how flexible you can be.
- C. You'll probably be asked for details about why you are leaving. Think about how you'll respond to this one. Some managers really want honest feedback. In other situations the less said the better. Craft your response before your meeting. If you can't think of anything much to say perhaps note how you've benefited from being at the company and it may "just be a good time to move on," or "it seems like a good opportunity."
- D. Prepare for a reaction...and it may not be a good one. The loss of a good employee can be stressful for a manager. Stay composed. This is where prepared comments can be helpful.
- E. You might get a counter offer. Is this something you would consider?

Offer to ensure a smooth transition.

Hopefully you'll work right up to your last day because it's the right thing to do. You are getting paid after all. But if nothing else, finishing projects, cooperating in the transition, and making things go well for the boss and the company certainly makes you look like a very professional employee. It's also a good idea to document your current projects so the new kid can step in easily.

Confirm pay and benefits.

Meet with HR to confirm the details regarding your last paycheck, handling of accrued leave, insurance, retirement, etc. It's much easier to get this figured before you leave.

Let people know.

Decide on when and how to tell your immediate coworkers about your termination. Again, remember that the goal is to be professional and classy. You may run into these people in the future, they could be useful to you at another time, and it would be nice if they said good things about you after you left. So try to be positive with everyone. Even those who had annoyed you or had been rude to you could be told: "You know, we may have had our issues at times, but I sure liked the way you... or, I sure learned... from you." Or, perhaps: "good luck with..."

Be sure to let other employees, outside contacts, suppliers, and important clients know as well. You'll likely want to work with your boss on most of these transition communications.

Return company property and take your personal property home.

Gather up all the company property so you're prepared to turn it over and aren't held responsible for missing stuff.

Determine whether you are bound by a noncompetition agreement.

Do you remember signing an agreement when you were hired or later on in your employment? If so, dust it off and see what it requires.

Ask for a reference.

If at all possible, ask for a reference. Even if you already have a job, a letter of reference can come in handy later on in your career. Past bosses can be difficult to track down. Letters of reference from previous employers can show a pattern of performance that can be used to impress prospective hiring managers in the future.

Bottom Line.

Don't burn bridges with your boss, coworkers or anyone else connected with your job. It's amazing what a small work world it can be. Past contacts who remember you as a professional colleague may play a significant role in your future.

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