

How to Leave a Job Gracefully

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No matter what the reason for the transition, your tenure, your role, or the number of professional years under your belt, it's imperative you work hard to leave a job gracefully. The advent of social media makes it that much more important. It's a good idea to connect with those in your professional network – including the colleagues you're leaving – via LinkedIn and other professional groups. But always keep in mind that even if you don't, any future employer could likely find a connection to your past employer.

Are you changing fields, or perhaps leaving the work force entirely? The old adage of “don't burn bridges” still applies - you simply never know where your next steps may take you in a world that feels increasingly smaller. A graceful departure is as much for you as it is for the employer you're leaving behind. The outcome of your separation can reverberate positively across your entire career. It's important to consider several factors when you get ready to take the leap.

Transparency comes first. Business communication experts would first urge you to be as transparent and forthcoming as possible once your career plans begin to take shape. In a small business or role with defined cycles, it might mean speaking up as the process for accepting your new job unfolds. That likely means communicating something earlier than the traditional two weeks' notice. Having the maturity and forethought to

volunteer information will speak volumes about your character as an employee.

Be considerate. Providing your current employer with a long notice period, in some cases even in advance of accepting another position, may not feel appropriate or may cause you to worry about potential negative consequences. That's why you should consider how much time it will take for you to hand your projects off cleanly. That's how much notice you should give. Your current employer will appreciate it and your new employer will respect it, guaranteed.

Think ahead. Before having the conversation with your current employer, identify a few clear next steps that need to be implemented immediately to ensure a seamless departure. Then be prepared to discuss how you will oversee this transition when you tender your resignation. Looking after the business needs as well as your own needs is a great way to demonstrate your maturity as you move the relationship to the next phase.

Protect your image. Don't let yourself become the target of gossip in the office. Practice the self-awareness and self-control it takes to avoid public "water cooler" comments, negative email, and especially online chatter about why you are leaving. And avoid discussing any of the faults you may have found with the company. Today it's easier than ever for people to follow a trail of poor behavior, which accomplishes nothing but sabotaging your next steps.

My parting advice: leave the dramatic endings to the movies and dig deep with authentic and transparent communication to ensure you leave on the high road.

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