
Handling Counteroffers

A counteroffer can be defined as any inducement — concrete or implied - from a current employer aimed at convincing you to stay after you have announced an intent to leave. Webster's Dictionary defined counter as a verb meaning, "to meet attacks or arguments with defensive or retaliatory steps — to offset or nullify." The word "defensive" in the above definition, seems to best describe the whole concept of counteroffers. In effect, these are short term strategies taken by an employer when their back is against the wall.

The cardinal rule is that good employers never make counteroffers; and smart employees never entertain them.

The reasons for this include:

- Most good employers adopt the attitude that achievers are entitled to reach for "the brass ring," and to better themselves. While they realize that losing any good employee represents a loss of investment in time and training, they also know that they have received more than their money's worth from good employees.
- Regardless of what you may be told by the employer, anyone who resigns but is retained by a counteroffer is always considered a security risk. Having once demonstrated a perceived lack of loyalty (for whatever reason), you lose your status as a "team player" and your place in the inner circle will always be in question.
- Any situation in which an employee is forced to get an outside offer before the present employer will suggest a raise, promotion or better working conditions is highly suspect. Counteroffers are only made in response to a threat to quit. Will you have to solicit an offer and threaten to quit every time you deserve better treatment?
- Counteroffers are usually nothing more than stall devices to give your employer time to replace you or make a transition on their timetable.
- Decent and well-managed companies don't make counteroffers - EVER! Their policies are fair and equitable and they will not be subjected to blackmail simply to keep one employee.

It is important at this point to remind yourself of your original reasons for making a job change. Chances are they still exist and you need to stay focused on those motivators in light of these interferences. Even though all employers know that counteroffers are a risky business at best, there are some firms who will give in to the temptation - particularly if they genuinely had plans for you at higher levels in the organization.