

Q&A Column
Author: Mark Swartz

Email Subject Line: Turning Down A Job Offer Gracefully

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Headline: How To Decline A Job Offer Tactfully

Summary:

I may be about to receive a job offer from a company that I am highly interested in working for. However, I am considering turning it down as there are no guaranteed hours and my current contract is full time until October. Is there any way of turning down a position gracefully while still keeping open the possibility of gaining employment with the company in the future?

Jeannie I., Ottawa, Ontario

[Landing Page copy](#)

Headline: Should You Pay For An “Employment Wanted” Ad?

Dear Mark,

I may be about to receive a job offer from a company that I am highly interested in working for, in a position I think would be a valuable experience for me. However, I am considering turning it down as there are no guaranteed hours and my current contract is full time until October. I have just come off EI and financially cannot accept casual hours. Is there any way of turning down a position gracefully while still keeping open the possibility of gaining employment with the company in the future?

Jeannie I., Ottawa, Ontario

Dear Jeannie,

I have two distinct responses to your question. First of all, yes, there are ways to decline an employment offer respectfully. And secondly, instead of rejecting it out of hand, why not turn the offer to your advantage?

Here's what I mean. In terms of saying “no” to the offer, presuming of course you get it, you can justify your reply by attributing it to the lack of guaranteed hours. In other words, you can thank the employer for the time they spent interviewing you; you can reiterate your interest in the company; and can reinforce why you would be a good fit for the position. Then you can mention that you've been seeking something with regular (i.e. non-casual) hours and, unfortunately, their current opening does not meet your needs. Having said all this, you admire the firm and would very much like to be considered for future opportunities.

The above can be transmitted either by e-mail or via a pleasant phone call to the person who is making the offer. You can even script the call in advance if need be so that it ends up sounding natural.

*But...*there's a second option; one that many people overlook. Keep in mind that you are most marketable to an employer right at the point when they have made an initial offer. Think about it: They've interviewed a number of candidates, have selected you as the best possible choice, and are hoping you'll accept so you can start soon and begin contributing. This is a great time to ask for whatever you can, within reason. It's not that far of a stretch to request that they guarantee you the hours you're looking for. Since you have little to lose (you're still employed at present no matter what they say), you could even mention that your current assignment gives you the hours

you need, though you'd highly prefer to work for the new employer – if only they could match your existing conditions.

If they come back with an agreement to accommodate you, you've won. If not, you have presented yourself as a professional who is determined to get what she wants, and who finds their company appealing; not a bad way to be perceived.

Please let me know how things work out for you. I'm interested in knowing how they respond.

All the best,
Mark



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