

Q&A Column
Author: Mark Swartz

Email Subject Line: Resigning To Accept a New Job

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Headline: Resigning Respectfully

Summary:

Question: I've just signed an employment contract with a new employer. I'm having a hard time telling my current employer that I'm leaving. I was wondering if there's a particular day of the week that's best to give the "bad" news?

Thank you.
Matthew, Vancouver, B.C.

Landing Page copy

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Dear Mark,

Question: I've just signed an employment contract with a new employer. I'm having a hard time telling my current employer that I'm leaving. I was wondering if there's a particular day of the week or a specific way that's best to give the "bad" news?

Thank you.
Matthew, Vancouver, B.C.

Dear Matthew,

Congrats on the new job! Now it's time to wrap up your existing position - respectfully and professionally.

How to do it right? Start by thinking about leaving on a positive note. You'll likely want to keep your reputation intact and nothing says "professionalism" like taking the time to transition smoothly. This means giving at least two weeks notice so that files can be transferred, assignments wrapped up as best possible, with maybe some time left over to train or brief others properly.

You'll also want to give back any confidential or propriety material that may be sitting around your work area, or that you've taken home with you. Same goes for the company's equipment, like a laptop, cell phone, Blackberry etc.

As for when you should break the news, maybe first thing Monday morning – or another day early in the week - so that your employer has time to react, prepare and take action. Make the announcement crisply and cleanly, mentioning that you've signed a new employment contract and would like to help make your final few weeks here work best for everyone. Offering to stay late or come in on the next few weekends to make sure things don't fall through the cracks will endear you to the folks you're leaving.

The point is to support your employer until the moment you walk out their door for good, so that you keep your options open for future interaction. Even if you plan on never working at this particular place again, people tend to remember if you left cooperatively, and believe me they'll never forget if you behave badly (e.g. by spending your waning days there gossiping, telling people off, badmouthing the boss...)

Personally I've had very mixed responses to announcing I was leaving for another job. At one company, a big 5 bank, I worked a solid two weeks after giving my notice and they took the time to organize a wonderful going away party, even buying me a gold-plated business card holder as a parting gift. At another firm, where I couldn't wait to get out, they said I could leave anytime I wanted so long as I gave my boss the rundown on where things stood with my assignments. Three days later I was bolting out the door, feeling like a giant weight had been lifted off my shoulders!

Saying goodbye to your current employer should be treated as simply another series of tasks you have to do well when finding a new job. And remember - leaving a good impression can pay off down the road.



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