

Q&A Column
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Email Subject Line: Quitting One Job To Find Another

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Headline: Should I Resign If I Want To Find Another Job?

Summary:

Question: I have resigned from my present employer. The position I left was extremely busy so taking time off to search for new employment was out of the question. My question is - would leaving my last job without another one to go to be held against me in an interview?

Patricia H., Ottawa, Ontario

Landing Page copy

Headline: Should I Resign If I Want To Find Another Job?

Dear Mark,

Question: I have resigned from my present employer. The position I left was extremely busy so taking time off to search for new employment was out of the question. It also involved a lot of overtime so job hunting at night was not possible. My question is - would this be held against me in an interview, that I have resigned without another job to go to? If yes, how should I handle this?

Patricia H., Ottawa, Ontario

Dear Patricia,

I know first hand how difficult it is to look for new employment when your current job is taking up much of your precious time. There are ways to do so successfully (see, for example, my article on "Conducting A Stealth Job Search.") However sometimes you just have to leave your current job in order to find another one.

When might this be appropriate?

- if your current role is way too hectic *and* you always have to be at the office
- if you're concerned your employer is spying on employees at work, and might find out you're looking, and could hold this against you in some way
- if the kind of employment you're seeking will be difficult to secure and requires a full-time job hunt

Some cautionary notes to consider here. First and foremost is the question new employers you're interviewing with are almost sure to ask: when, why, and *how*, did you leave your last job? The concern in their minds is that you might be the type of person who would ditch them in the blink of an eye, leaving a gaping hole in their business and wasting the time and money they intend to spend on developing you as an employee (not to mention the expense of hiring and training someone else to replace you).

Another thing to keep in mind is that when you resign from a job, you are not eligible for Employment Insurance. So your finances should be in order as you budget for the amount of time

you'll be out of work. My advice is to allow for two more months than you think you'll need, as people consistently underestimate how long it will take them to find satisfying employment.

Of course, in your case, Patricia, you've already left your previous job. Should you be in a similar situation down the road, perhaps before departing you might try letting the folks your working for know of your intentions. Sound strange? Think about this: since you're planning on leaving anyway, the worst that can happen is they show you the door sooner. But it may well be possible to negotiate a 'soft departure,' where you give them ample notice for you to finish critical assignments and maybe even train your replacement. In return you get continued salary, and you might be able to negotiate time off during the day to go to job interviews, meet with recruiters etc.

But what to do in your particular situation? You might try telling interviewers the truth, that you felt it unfair to both yourself and your employer to be there while looking for work. If you can show that you attempted to help make the transition smoother for your bosses it will go a long way to buffing your image. If not, you might say something like "I tried to let them know sooner, however the environment just wasn't very accepting of this sort of thing and I wanted to make sure I left with as much in place as possible to reduce the impact of my departure." As for whether future employers care if you're still working or not, take a gander at my article on "Do employers care if you're employed?"

All the best in your search!