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The Counter Offer

It is a natural instinct to resist change and avoid disruption, and your present employer will be no exception. If you're doing a good job, they will want to keep you and will attempt to do so with a counter offer. Even though you have accepted a new job elsewhere, they may try to convince you that you have made a mistake.

Counter offers can be made in a variety of ways:

- "We have plans for you that have been scheduled for implementation. I guess it's my fault for not telling you sooner."
- "I want to let you in on some confidential information. There is a reorganization developing that will mean a significant promotion for you within a few months."
- "We'll match your new offer. Your raise was supposed to go into affect the first of next quarter anyway, but because of your fine record, we'll start it sooner."
- The President and Vice President want to have dinner with you tonight before you make your final decision.

Implications of a Counter Offer

A counter offer can be very flattering, sometimes causing your emotions to obscure your objective decision to leave your present employer. There is also the natural feeling of "buyer's remorse" – that vague apprehension of change that subtly urges you to reconsider your decision. When confronted with a counter offer, ask yourself these questions:

- I made a decision to leave because I felt another environment would better fill my career needs. If I stay, will the situation at my company really improve just because I said I was quitting?
- If I decide to stay, will my loyalty be suspect and affect my chance for advancement in the future?
- If my loyalty is in question, will I be an early layoff if business slows down?
- They are offering me a raise to stay. Is it just my annual review coming early?
- The raise they offered to keep me is above their guidelines for my job. Does that mean they are "buying time" until they can find my replacement within their regular salary bracket? Should I stay, how will this affect my future salary increases?
- In the final analysis, I got this counter offer because I resigned. Will I have to threaten to quit every time I want to advance with my company in the future?

The Professional Approach

As a professional, you must make your career decisions objectively, free of the emotional pressures you are likely to feel later when being urged to reconsider. While well meaning friends, relatives and business associates will offer advice, you

must depend primarily on your own judgment. After all, you are the only one who is in the position to understand all of the implications of a counter offer. Expect your company to be sorry to see you leave and to make some attempt to keep you. At best, their response should be considered flattering, but beset with numerous pitfalls you should not risk.

End your relationship with your employer as professionally as you began it. Your new company will be anxious to have you start, so you should do so as soon as possible. Two weeks' notice is usually standard, but depends on the industry and your position.

A counter offer is really a belated affirmation of the contributions you have made to your old company. Move ahead to your new job with the goal of making yourself as valuable to your new employer as you were to the old.