

Take the Money... and Stay? Maybe Not

By Accountemps

Another employer has offered you a job – and for a higher rate of pay. But when you present your resignation letter to your current boss, she makes an unexpected play: She asks you to stay, insisting the department simply cannot do without you, and offers you a pay raise that outdistances your potential new salary.

You're flattered. You think, "Wow. If I'd known my boss valued me so much, maybe I wouldn't have been so eager to look for another position." But wait a minute. Before you start second-guessing your decision to move on, ask yourself the following questions:

What's the real reason for the counteroffer? Yes, it feels good to think your boss is willing to "up the stakes" to retain you. But once the glow of your ego boost fades, consider why she made that offer. After all, if she felt you were so vital to the organization, why weren't you already earning the higher salary?

More than likely, your boss's counteroffer was a strategic move designed to prevent the inconvenience of losing a productive worker. She may hope to avoid a candidate search at a time when critical deadlines are on the horizon. Or she may be looking to save on costs associated with hiring and training a new worker. It also may be the case that your boss knows if she must hire someone new, she will need to pay that person the salary she's now offering to you because it's the competitive rate.

Why was I going to leave? Reflect on what made you start perusing the employment ads. Was your job search simply a quest for a higher salary? Like most professionals, you were probably motivated to seek a different position due to a combination of factors. And accepting a counteroffer won't likely cure your boredom with your responsibilities – or change the fact that you don't feel comfortable in your firm's corporate culture.

Also, think about what you'd be giving up if you decide to accept the counteroffer. Even if you aren't sure the position at the other firm will fulfill all your needs, it might address those that you feel are most important to your overall job satisfaction.

Will accepting the counteroffer hurt my reputation? Your boss is urging you to stay now, but the fact that you entertained an offer from another firm may have damaged the trust between you permanently. If your colleagues find out you'd planned to leave, your relationship with them may become strained, as well – especially if they learn you were made a generous offer to stay in spite of your "disloyalty." Mistrust and resentment in the work environment can, of course, greatly impact your job satisfaction.

If you decide to accept the counteroffer, doing so is also likely to burn bridges with the potential employer. They believed they'd found the ideal candidate – and you didn't lead them to think otherwise. Worse, they may believe you used their offer just to improve your current situation. There is also now a group of people you may encounter elsewhere in the business world who may view you unfavourably.

The wise choice? Politely decline the counteroffer and say you must honour the agreement you made with the new employer. Your boss may not like your decision, but she'll probably respect you for it. And your professional reputation is worth much more than a bigger paycheck.

Accountemps, a Robert Half Company, is the world's first and largest temporary staffing service specializing in the placement of accounting, finance and bookkeeping professionals. The firm has more than 350 locations worldwide and offers online job search services at www.accountemps.com