

STORY AMANDA WOODARD

# PARTING OF THE WAYS: HOW TO BE A GOOD QUITTER

LEAVING YOUR JOB? HERE'S HOW TO DO IT RIGHT.

**S**ome people choose to go out with a bang, making a big exit from a job they may have been unhappy in without so much as a backward glance.

As satisfying as this behaviour may immediately be, leaving a job on bad terms can come back to bite you. References will be hard to obtain for a start, and you never know who you may end up working with in the future – people who know people, who know people, who know you and who heard about how you quit.

Parting ways with your employer gracefully and on good terms is much more beneficial for your professional reputation and career prospects.

## PREPARE YOUR EXIT

If you are contemplating a career move, it is a good idea to start laying the groundwork, says leadership and HR specialist Rebecca Houghton. Managers truly hate to be caught off guard by a resignation that seemingly comes out of the blue.

“Try to be as transparent as possible in the lead-up. If you can signal early, through career

conversations, that you may not be able to find what you are looking for in the organisation, then it doesn't come as a big surprise when you hand in your notice.”

When it comes to actually resigning, the first step should be a face-to-face conversation with your boss, however difficult that may sound.

Karen Gately, founder of HR consultancy Corporate Dojo, says the mistake that many people make is to put a letter on the boss's desk or send an email of resignation. Although it is never an easy thing to do, it pays to show courage and act professionally by having a conversation first.

“We are all human. Being polite and respectful is important. Say something like, ‘I have been reflecting on my future, and there are other things I want to do. I think the next best step for me is outside the organisation.’”

## PUT IT IN WRITING

A follow-up letter confirming your conversation should be sent to your manager and HR, says Gately. It should be brief and to the point, stating that you have made a

decision to resign and the date from which your resignation is effective.

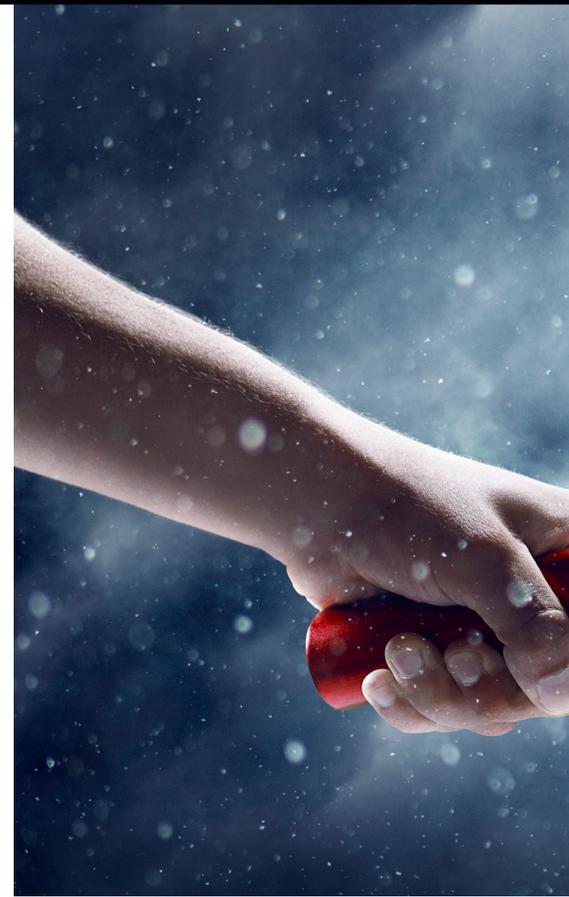
A lot of people find it tempting to explain themselves, adds Houghton, but less is more, particularly in writing.

“It should be really simple – thanking them for the opportunity and confirming when your last day of work will be following the contractual notification period.”

It is frequently the case that the decision to resign comes after a series of frustrations or a personality clash. Gately says it is important to acknowledge that you are feeling emotionally charged and not resort to rash actions that are going to reverberate into your future.

When you feel hurt, it may be tempting to emulate the cult legend who wrote a resignation letter on a sheet of toilet paper, “as a symbol of how this company has treated me, and ironically, how it is disposed of is where I feel this company is going”.

However, as much as you may want to retaliate, standing up for something important on your way out the door is not useful or advisable, unless you have been bullied.





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KAREN GATELY, CORPORATE DOJO

People who are happy to work for the company don't want to hear about your personal “drama”, says Gately.

Houghton agrees that emotionally unloading when quitting has the effect of “poisoning the water hole” for those who remain. Colleagues left behind, those who have to pick up your work and deal with the fallout from your departure, are likely to feel disgruntled, which may undermine your reputation more widely than you ever intended.

### **WORK IT OUT**

As tempting as it may be to make an immediate exit, and despite pressure from your new employer to start straight away, experts say the right thing to do is to work out your full notice period.

“If there are projects you are working on, then prioritise the time to map out where you have got to. If there is knowledge that is unique to you, document that. Hand over the baton, so that people can continue their own race and have a chance of winning,” advises Gately.

Some disgruntled staff go on sick leave for their entire notice period, but this leaves a bitter taste in everyone's mouth.

“It feels like you are taking advantage,” Gately says. “A company will see using sick leave for non-genuine purposes as stealing from them, and is that the last impression you want to leave for them?”

### **GOODBYE AND GOOD LUCK**

Finally, before you depart your job, take the time to do the rounds and say your goodbyes, focusing on those with whom you have developed a rapport.

“People appreciate it if you reach out and say, ‘I don't know if you are aware, but I'm moving on. It was good to work with you,’” says Gately.

If you suddenly disappear without a word, people create stories in their own minds. You don't need to email the entire staff, particularly in a large organisation, or explain why you are leaving.

Keep it personal, polite and professional. That way, you will protect both your reputation and your relationships. ■

