



Stanford eCorner

Case Studies: The Right and Wrong Ways to Exit a Job

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Leaving a job is as critical a negotiation as starting one, says [Arbor Advisors](#) partner Stan Christensen, and the last impression you make is even more critical than the first. Christensen offers two examples of employees who have left his firm: One who shared his desire to move on and arranged for a six-month transition plan, and the other who slammed down a same-day letter of resignation. He extols the first case as an example of what to do to facilitate a long-term positive relationship. He also points to the awkwardness of the second scenario, and comments on its dishonesty and the difficulties left in its wake.



Transcript

So finally, the last thing I want to talk about before we have some Q&A around this and discussion is job transitions. Just like negotiating your way into a job is negotiating, leave is a negotiation. Leaving a job is a negotiation as well. So Case Stud of two employees at my organization who have left and one left, you know, I think very well based on the way that he did it and one didn't leave so well. So the guy who left, of course I won't use names. He came to me one day and he said, you know, I've been here three years and I just feel like I'm not really moving forward in the organization. I want you to know that I've started to look around at other jobs. And there are always kind of trickiness as to transitions but I wanted you to know that. I want to figure out can we work out a transition plan that works for both of us. OK.

So what do you think my response to that as a manager? My response was like, almost any manager, wow! I really appreciate you come in to me in that spirit. And I can kind of see from your perspective you kind of, you know, squeeze all the juice out of this lemon. We probably don't have the next level role for you here. Let's figure how to make that work. And in this situation you ended up staying for six months in the transition. We ended up getting a client that was going to be about a six-month assignment. I gave him the option of working on it. It was some new stuff for him. And it ended up just being a tremendous, you know, effective transition both for the clients for our firm and for him. And we're still in touch.

He emailed me today in fact. I got email from him today about some different things and you know, that just provoked and launched a positive relationship. Another employee, you know, the finance industry is kind of funny about transitions. There's a lot of proprietary information. And so often at big banks what they'll do is, you know, if they are going to let somebody go, they'll walk them to the door they'll bring security in and shut down their computer and there's sort of an awkwardness. Well, obviously not that kind of a bank but still there's some fear about people taking proprietary data and he'd come from a big bank and so want to give him a little bit break on this. But he came to me and said, can I come talk to you in my office? I thought to myself, wow you know, this guy's like four levels below the main organization is kind of commanding me to come to his office. Something's up this is weird. He wouldn't normally, you know, take this kind of approach. So I walked in his office and we sat

down, and he handed me his letter of resignation.

And he said, I'm resigning effectively. I'll, you know, be packing up my things today and I'm gone at 5 o'clock. And my response was, I mean, I tried so hard not to just burst out laughing because it was just so ridiculous. I mean he was like very hostile. He's trying to put on the game face. You know I'm out of here at 5 o'clock. I said, why that's surprising. You know, I hadn't seen that coming. That's interesting. What I'd like to do is talk about that a little bit.

I mean you got a bunch of clients you're working on. You want a transition that work and he was just so difficult about it. And he just left things in a mess and we are cleaning up for six months afterwards. And I haven't talked to him since. OK. Not surprisingly. And so the last impression that you make at an organization and you're going to have transitions, right? None of you are going to work somewhere for the next 50 years. The last impression you make is what stays with the people you left behind not the first impression. I have no idea what my first impression of him was on the first day of the job. I absolutely remember how he left.

And so think about making those transitions with grace and using some of the skills that we've been over in the negotiation class. That's a difficult conversation, it's hard to pull it off well but if you do your reputation is going to follow you.