

URL: <https://ecorner-stag.tcg.stanford.edu/quick-dips/craft-a-clean-exit-strategy/>

Stanford Engineering Professor Bob Sutton explains that it's sometimes better to leave a horrible work environment than to try and tolerate or change it. An expert on organizational psychology, Sutton cautions against lashing out at those who disrespect you even if you're quitting, as that type of behavior may only sabotage any future prospects and leave you isolated.



Transcript

The best thing you can do, let's start out with this, is if you are in a situation where people treat you absolutely horribly, if you can get out, you should get out if you possibly can.. In fact, the email that I just got this morning, which is a woman bought the book and she told me the book wasn't as useful as she hoped because she worked for the IRS dealing with really, really hostile small business owners, this is a lawyer, who are always late, and it was just mean people day after day after day.. And I said to her, "The only thing I can think is either to get out "or to form the thickest skin possible." I suggested she find a therapist.. She didn't quit.. That's the best I could do.. So there's lots of times when you should get out when the situation is bad.. But to give you scientific advice, do not be stupid about it.. It's a long life.. If you burn bridges and piss people off, it gets harder to get another job, and I think we all know this.. One of my favorite examples, JetBlue..

Some of you may have heard of this.. In 2010, there was a flight attendant named Steven Slater.. What happened was, and if you're gonna pick a job where people treat you like dirt, being a flight attendant is a pretty good one.. So this poor guy, Steven Slater, he's on a flight with two women who are really being hostile to them, and he's fighting with them about their luggage in the overhead compartment and everything.. And then as the flight lands, I believe it was in Pittsburgh, one of them, and it's taxiing, one of them opens the overhead bin, he gets hit on the head with the luggage really hard, and he's pissed.. So he gets on the microphone as the plane is pulling to the gate.. He cusses out everybody on the plane.. He activates the emergency exit slide.. He takes two beers and he leaves the scene.. Okay? (audience laughs) It's a true story..

It's well documented.. Okay, so this is classic Johnny Paycheck, take the job and shove it material.. He was a folk hero, blah, blah, blah.. But things actually sucked for him after that.. He got fired.. He was on probation.. He had to pay fine.. He said he was depressed and sorry.. So don't be stupid about it if you possibly can, although sometimes it's tough...