

TEN STEPS TO A SUCCESSFUL GOODBYE
How to complete the final chapter in your current job
by Pat Stevens

Reprinted from the **NATIONAL BUSINESS EMPLOYMENT WEEKLY**
from the publishers of the **Wall Street Journal: Dow Jones & Company Inc**

The first impression you make on a new job is important, but so is your last one. In a volatile workplace, your resume is likely to become dotted with career changes and new skills. Being flexible and adjusting emotionally as you leave one job and prepare for another are essential career-survival skills. How you leave says a lot about you, whatever the circumstances. The process of leaving isn't about packaging a box and moving to a new place. It's about cementing relationships and establishing a network that will ensure you a place in the business world. It's also about realizing that the desk next to you at a future employer may be occupied by your former boss.

To stay emotionally grounded while saying good-bye and beginning your transition, apply the following 10 strategies:

1. **Express your appreciation and stay connected.** Take time to reminisce with colleagues about projects you've worked on, special times you shared and joint accomplishments. Consider sending short thank-you notes after you leave that mention their contributions to your success. Make sure co-workers have your address and phone numbers and remember to stay in touch with them. Regardless of the circumstances involving a job change, it's important to "maintain dignity" and avoid embarrassing "yourself by burning bridges with co-workers and managers," says Don Kelley, an HR specialist at Texas Utilities in Dallas. Their ties to you are important links to the future.
2. **Let go.** Letting go of security, embracing a new opportunity and exploring the unknown takes courage. Focus on what is instead of what was, Dr. Kelley advises. Since the primary safety net during periods of change is self-confidence, Dr. Kelley reminds employees in transition that they'll fit in and find a new identity. During change, "your ability to tolerate ambiguity and uncertainty will stand as a critical skill," says Price Pritchett, founder of Pritchett and Associates in Dallas and author of "New Work Habits for a Radically Changing World" (1996, Pritchett Publishing Co.). "Learn to loosen up and be willing to wing it."
3. **Leave your office in top shape.** Be meticulous about how you leave your office. Only take files that belong to you and make sure your desk, computer, records and files are neat, organized and complete. Provide employees with updates and leave notes about on-going projects.
4. **Create a morale-building file.** Keep a file of positive work evaluations, thank-you notes and other documents that will supply you with enthusiasm, courage and hope in the upcoming weeks. Realize you've made a difference in others' lives and will do so again.
5. **Don't be critical.** Avoid criticizing your company, co-workers and managers or participation in negative conversations about these subjects. You may feel bitter or demoralized, but letting others know your feelings will backfire. Remember and discuss the positive events you experienced, even if there were only a few of them. Those left behind can feel disoriented or unsettled. Being a peacemaker will help you be remembered positively.
6. **Prepare, reflect and move on.** Recognize that every work experience has value, and view your job as a bridge to the next one. Be introspective, realistic and excited. Dream about what might be. "There's always a place for talented people," says Alex McKenna, president of McKenna Group International, a career transition firm in Milwaukee, Wis.
7. **Take time to play.** Schedule an enjoyable event before beginning the next phase in your life. It can be something simple like visiting a botanical garden with your family, having friends over for a barbecue or pursuing an activity you never had time for. Consider a vacation if time allows. Even long leisurely weekends can provide opportunities to laugh, become energized and relax.
8. **Recognize the value of friends.** Don't neglect friends and networking opportunities. This change may make you feel reclusive and want to retreat into a corner. But contact with and reassurance from others may be what you need most. You may be surprised to discover that many others have been through similar experiences. Successful people often have experienced worse or more unsettling events than a job loss. Identify supportive people and maintain contact with them. Also keep up a routine that balances church, family and social obligations even if you don't feel like it.
9. **Analyze your financial status.** Review your finances and take steps to become more secure in a time of transition. Determine how leaving a job and taking a new one will affect your retirement, 401 (k) and IRA plans. Double-check your health, disability and life insurance plans to ensure your family will be covered during the transition. If not, review your COBRA rights and other options so that unexpected medical bills won't disrupt your financial security.
10. **Be open to new possibilities.** "Change always comes bearing gifts," says Dr. Pritchett. It's up to you to find them. Your job change can be an opportunity in disguise. Don't be so reluctant to embrace change that you can't see new opportunities that become available. Starting over is part of career advancement in today's turbulent workplace. Successfully ending the final chapter of one job will give you a good start on the first chapter of a new one.

**How to Leave a Job Gracefully
And Make a Good Last Impression
By Adelle Waldman
From The Wall Street Journal Online**

I quit.

It's a phrase that takes a lot of courage to say, especially when it's being directed at an employer. Utter it at the wrong time or in the wrong manner, and the results could be damaging to your career.

For Jennifer, an attorney in New York, it was a particularly gut-wrenching experience. The twentysomething had been looking for a new job for several months when she got an offer from one of the law firms where she had interviewed. The job wasn't her first choice among those she applied for, but it did offer more money than her current position.

She didn't know what to do: Take the job that was being offered or hold off for one of the ones she wanted more? It wouldn't be smart to turn down a sure thing, she figured, so she decided to quit. "I wanted to do the right thing and give them a full two weeks' notice."

Jennifer, who asked that her last name not be used for this column, told her boss that she got a better offer elsewhere and respectfully quit. Later that night, she regretted the move. She felt that she should have held out for a job she wanted more, and didn't want to take the new position in the interim. "I didn't sleep at all" that night, she says. The next day, she rescinded her notice.

Jennifer's boss was forgiving, and allowed her to keep her position. A month later, however, she was offered a job she really wanted at a different firm, and left, for good.

Still, Jennifer's transition was hardly smooth, and it probably wasn't the ideal way the situation could have been handled.

"Once you give notice, you've kind of crossed an imaginary line -- a point of no return," says Marc Karasu, a spokesman for Yahoo HotJobs. Jennifer could have tried to buy more time from the firm who made her the offer before she said yes, he says. In the meantime, she might have been able to tease an offer from one of the other firms she was interested in.

Mastering the ins and outs of moving from job to job is an important skill, particularly for young people, since we are likely to move around a lot. It's more than just being professional, it's about shoring your future career moves, and your finances. The average person will have 9.2 jobs between the ages of 18 and 34, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Meanwhile, a survey from the Society of Human Resource Management last November found that 75% of employees are actively or passively looking for work, now that the economy is getting stronger.

How can you make a move as pain-free as possible?

First, schedule a private moment with your boss to break the news -- and do it tactfully, says Mr. Karasu. Instead of screaming, "I quit," Mr. Karasu suggests saying something about how fortunate you have been and how grateful you are for all the opportunities you have been given, but that you have an offer that you felt you couldn't refuse. In other words, don't be tempted to use leaving as an opportunity to blow off steam.

"You never know when your boss will be a good reference," says Deborah Keary, a director at the Society for Human Resource Management. "It's so dumb to make everyone angry before you go."

Paul Kitzrow made an effort to leave his job with some tact. "It was very hard to bite my tongue toward the end," says Mr. Kitzrow, a 23-year-old who recently left a corporate job to work with his uncle on a new business in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Mr. Kitzrow was tempted to offer "constructive criticism" about everything he disliked in his old job, but he had a feeling that it wouldn't go over well. Plus, he had taken some extra vacation time before giving notice, and his boss could have docked his pay for the days he took off but didn't.

In the end, however, he didn't burn any bridges, and his boss offered to write him a letter of reference for future career moves.

Don't burn bridges with co-workers, either. Remember that anyone you've worked with is a potential reference, career experts say.

Another way to make your transition as smooth as possible is to give more than two weeks' notice, says Ms. Keary. She says most employers won't be able to find and hire a replacement in two weeks, so if you can give them extra time -- three weeks or a month -- to get started, they will usually be appreciative.

There's a caveat, though. Some employers get very upset when someone quits and may want the worker out immediately, she says. So before you tell your boss, you might want to reflect on how your boss has responded in the past when employees gave notice. Ms. Keary also suggests that, just in case, you download all the personal documents on your computer to a disk before you go in to see your boss. That way, if he or she ignominiously boots you out the door, you already have those things in your possession.

Presuming your boss doesn't flip out, Mr. Karasu suggests you do as much as you can to help your boss hire your replacement, which might include writing a job ad or even gathering and vetting resumes from possible candidates.

Another thing to do is to write instructions about how to do your job for your replacement and even to offer to make yourself available to answer any questions for a week or two after you leave, Mr. Karasu says. "If you've done all that, that's about all anyone can expect," he says.

Except maybe a hand-written thank you note. That's a little touch that Lorie Lebert, a career coach in Novi, Mich., recommends. The note should "thank them for understanding your position and for giving you the opportunity to begin with," she says. "A really nice thank you note goes a long way."

Of course, you should also resist the temptation to start completely slacking off after you've given notice, she says. "Work as hard as you possibly can," Ms. Lebert says. "People are watching you."

That's what Myles Perkins is trying to do, but it's hard. The 29-year-old Washington, D.C., resident works in commercial real-estate finance -- at least for now. He is attending business school next year and will take the summer off, leaving his current position in June.

In the meantime, he says he feels like a "dead man walking." "I've been passed over for a couple of projects because everyone knows I'm leaving and they don't want me to start something," he says.

Mr. Perkins feels like he's twiddling his thumbs a bit, without enough work to keep him busy throughout the day, but still wants to do his best. "My boss has been really good to me, and I don't want to appear to be a total slacker," he says.