

## **Your employee hands in their resignation. Now what?**

In most instances, this is a no-brainer. The person resigning has made a decision to move on for whatever reason. You accept it and begin the replacement process. Hopefully, you've arranged some form of succession planning and cross-training so you're not scrambling without direction.

However, what if management thinks they just can't do without this employee? Do you counter-offer their resignation with promises of more pay or other incentives? Andrea Poe's article "Say, isn't that Joe?" cites Sandy Wotring (HR manager of Fenestrate Inc., a software developer) agrees that no matter how valuable an employee may be, you can't bargain. "I'm not going to be held hostage for money because, once you do that, employees are in charge." says Wotring. This would be true whether the incentive is money or promises to "play nice" going forward.

The reason stated in the resignation may not be the whole truth either. The manager(s) probably have a fairly good idea of what the issues are if they are in tune with the employee, and it is their loss if they don't. An exit interview may help determine the true cause for the decision, which will help as the organization prepares to move on.

The reality is that the employee has chosen to resign. That should never be an avenue of negotiation. The resignation is a clear statement of how the employee feels, and one dictates their own approach to problems. If the issues cited in the resignation are an ongoing issue, negotiation at this stage serves no logical purpose. The employee would not have resigned if their intention was not to leave.

If the employee is asked to stay, what will have changed? Animosity and / or mistrust will be an issue on both sides whether it was there before or not. The stressors that made the employee decide to quit will likely not have gone anywhere. Asking the employee to stay might alleviate the need for management to seek a replacement, but it also opens a Pandora's Box of potential problems with shareholders and sends a very negative message to remaining staff.

Encouraging an employee to stay once they've submitted their resignation is akin to a child having a temper tantrum. Most parents would agree that giving in sends the wrong message to the child, and that the child *will* do it again if it's encouraged. It's also a great ego boost to think you're irreplaceable.

It's important to realize "if you can't be replaced, you can never move up" – Peter Nygård. This can easily be interpreted as "if you can't be replaced, you can never evolve as a person." By playing "let's make a deal", management is actually holding someone back from standing by a decision they've already made. They're forced to second-guess themselves, and most people spend a great deal of time in evaluating all of their options long before submitting the resignation. It explains why most employees who do stay on when asked will either leave within 6 months or use this method in the future to negotiate again. No matter how one looks at this, little benefit is gained for either party in negotiating after the resignation is in hand.

One company I worked for years ago had asked me to stay on after handing in my resignation. I was absolutely shocked that they would, because my thought was "if they

didn't value me enough this morning to correct (problem x), what guarantee do I have that it will change tonight because they said so?" I stood by my decision and have never regretted it. Everyone can be replaced and should be allowed to move on to the next phase of their career without regret or guilt.

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