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# Think twice before accepting a job counteroffer

**Denver Business Journal by Stephanie Klein**

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When you've secured a job offer, you may believe your search is over. But you're not done yet.

After you receive an offer, your employer may make a counteroffer. HR and recruitment experts say that accepting a counteroffer is career suicide, period. But in the last several quarters, many recruiters have seen an above-average number of counteroffers.

Why is there an increase? Is it still a bad idea to accept a counteroffer? Let's look at the factors contributing to this trend, and how both candidates and employers can address it.

To start, let's look at why an individual may be in a position to accept a counteroffer.

Many seek new positions because of frustrations at their current job. And yet, some pursue something new without ever bringing up those frustrations to their supervisor. Some employees don't have ongoing discussions with their managers to learn where things truly stand. If an employee doesn't communicate their concerns and frustrations, how could they know if the issues might be resolved?

A frustrated employee may be surprised to learn those issues may be easily solved or mitigated. Bringing up concerns before you seek a new job or accept a new role is a critical step. However, sometimes situations won't change or leadership is lacking. In today's struggling job market, some leaders have gotten lazy, and have forgone employee appreciation for the misguided belief that a paycheck should be enough. In that case, it's time to look for a new job.

Let's say that as a job seeker, you've been offered another position. How might you respond if your current company makes a counteroffer with more money and flexibility, and more interesting projects? You'd be wise to think twice about your answer.

In some cases, counteroffers can be a wonderful opportunity. Unfortunately, they usually aren't. Ask yourself, why didn't your employer offer these incentives before? Why did it take the threat of quitting for leadership to take notice and make a change?

Oftentimes, a nervous employer realizes just how much money it would cost to replace you. One must remember, though, that an employer will never forget your desire to leave and the lengths it went to keep you. Trust is hard to gain and easy to lose in such situations. Even if the situation at your current employer changes, statistics say those changes likely will be temporary.

For companies that have lost a potential candidate because of a counteroffer from their current employer, think about where you may have improved your interviewing and recruitment process for this candidate. In all likelihood, you failed to identify what the candidate truly wanted and needed.

Was your process detailed and comprehensive? If it was just one-step interview, don't be surprised if you run into many accepted counteroffers. If you low-balled the candidate on money or time off, or didn't spend enough time explaining how this opportunity would serve both the organization and the candidate, you missed a key selling point.

You must uncover motivations early and address them throughout the interview process. If you work with a valued recruiter, they may be able to give you more insight into market conditions, pay ranges, benefits and the overall fairness of the offer. Don't be fooled by the glut of applications you receive; finding topnotch talent is still a challenge in this market.

By refining your process, keeping an eye on what's in it for the employee and ensuring your offer is desirable, you'll encounter fewer issues with surprise counteroffers.

Finally, in some cases, the candidate may have gone through a detailed interview process and their motivations were clearly identified and addressed — but they're still unsure, waffling between your offer and their current employer's counteroffer. In this case, it's time to listen to the candidate.

Why are they stalling? Are they scared of change? Can you make any attractive changes to your offer? This isn't counteroffering, but rather negotiation. Once you've done all you can in negotiations, two days is a reasonable time to wait for a response; one week is not. At that point, don't be afraid to walk away. Fear of losing a good candidate isn't a good place to negotiate from, and if your hiring process is strong and detailed, you'll be able to find another good candidate in time.

The Colorado hiring market is picking up, albeit slowly. Applicants: Be diligent, honest and communicate your needs and motivations clearly if you're seeking new employment. Employers, remember that a comprehensive interview process will go far in preventing unwanted surprises for both the candidate and you.

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