

Two Week's Notice is an Old Wives' Tale! It Does Not Exist and Never Has



You can send your workplace questions to Stephen at: StephenSays@bellow.press.

Questions selected to be answered, will appear in this column. Please use the Subject: Stephen Says for all emails. Stephen Viscusi is a bestselling author, television personality, and CEO of The Viscusi Group, global executive recruiters located in New York. Follow Stephen on Twitter @WorkplaceGuru, Like Stephen on Facebook; and follow him on LinkedIn.

Dear Stephen:

I am thinking of taking a new job in the project management department of a competitive dealership. I can't say for certain, but I think I'm 50/50 on taking it. I like my current job, but this opportunity just came to me out of the blue. It's more money and a great new team. But I am a bit torn. I have a feeling my current employer would match the money and try to keep me but I just think it is time for me to move on and grow in my career. This means meeting new people in a new environment. Wow ... I think I may have just talked myself into taking the new job.

If I do take it, this new company will want me to start at the beginning of the new year. I am sure my company will expect at least two weeks' notice, as I have been here six years. In fact, I think my current employer usually asks people to give notice a month before they leave. They expect a "turnover report" and outgoing employees to help transition a new person into the role. Basically, they want you to train your replacement. I will be going to another dealer, a competitor, but I will not be working on competitive accounts or taking any business. I am not a sales rep, and I really have zero influence

on sales. I am a project manager, so they need me to stay as long as possible to smooth the transition. I do not want to burn any bridges, but I don't want to lose out on this opportunity. I could also use some time off in between jobs, and it is the holidays. How do I handle this?

Out of Time

Dear Out of Time,

Two weeks' notice is an old wives' tale. If you squint just right it might seem to make sense, but it is not actually a rule. The only situation in which you have to

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think about giving such advance notice is if you have an employment agreement that explicitly requires you give notice (which most people don't).

Think of it this way: When a company fires people, do they give them two weeks' notice? Not usually. Consider your choice to change jobs as a decision to fire your company, and let the same rules apply. There might be times when it is appropriate to give some notice but it certainly shouldn't be the expectation.

Whenever I give this advice, I get pushback because people are worried about burning bridges. The tough truth is anytime you quit a job in which you are an asset, your employer will not be happy. This is especially true if you can't point to specific benefits the other job will offer. They may wish you well and tell you they are happy for you but you should understand from the get-go you just made their lives a whole lot harder. On top of that, if you're really that good, they'll

be happy to welcome you back if you ever want to return. Not to mention if you already have another job lined up, you shouldn't be worrying about your old employer. That's all in the past. Any way you cut it, people who give two weeks' notice are just suckers.

All this applies to interior designers, project managers and almost everything else but sales. A departing salesperson may take customers out the door with them, which poses a big, big threat. If you're a departing salesperson, and your boss doesn't rant and rave upon receiving your resignation, you must be a horrible salesperson. That's a different story for a different column.

I should mention I am also not one of those people who will tell you not to consider a counter offer. Sometimes I encourage people to quit just to see if they can get a raise. If you have been working at a company for an extended period of time (six years,

for example, is an eternity today), then it is very often the case your employer can start taking your value and work for granted. I think it's important employees remember to take care of themselves. No one else will.

The bottom line is this: If you have made up your mind to go, there must be a reason. If you need to leave, just walk out the door, and don't look back. Do not be disruptive or rude, just resign and pack up your things. Take a two-week break for yourself, then start your new job. This may seem cold and unkind, but it is just the way the game is played today. The rules have totally changed. Giving two weeks' notice may seem nice, but it is definitely not necessary. Do a proper and thorough turnover report, offer to be available for questions to whoever replaces you, and move on. Do not kid yourself, the bridge is burnt once you resign. Anything after that is just formality. Happy New Year!

Stephen