

How to Resign Gracefully

With bonus season upon us, many law firm associates are beginning to plot their next career move. Some may be looking for an in-house or government job, a position with a smaller firm, or employment in another city, while some are simply looking to move to another firm not that much different than their current one. The good news is that lateral hiring picks up after the holidays and your chances of finding a new job are high.

Here are some tips for resigning from your current job without burning any bridges:

You MUST resign in person. It is unprofessional (and cowardly) to resign by email or phone.

Give notice first thing in the morning. You'll have more courage before that jolt of caffeine wears off and your boss is more likely to be around.

Give your notice to just one person - preferably the partner or supervisor for whom you do the most work.

The conversation with your boss on resigning should be brief and concise: "I want to let you know that I will be leaving (current firm) to join (future firm). I've thought long and hard about this decision and although I've really enjoyed my time here and have learned a lot, I know this is the right decision for me at this point in my career. Thank you for all of your guidance and mentoring and I hope we can stay in touch."

Don't talk about resigning to your peers beforehand - you do not want your boss to hear about your resignation from another source.

If your partner or boss is unsupportive or even angry - don't take it personally. They are most likely sad to lose you and are already worrying about who is going to take over your matters.

If your partner or boss asks you to reconsider leaving - stay strong. You have made your decision. In my experience, associates who withdraw their resignation wind up leaving within the year - mainly because of unfulfilled promises from the partner who encouraged them to stay.

Please refrain from criticizing anyone or anything at your current firm - even if the HR department asks for feedback. Leave on a high note and stay positive.

Ask the HR department for their departure policies and follow them closely. Do not take any client files, precedent or work product unless you have written permission to do so from the Conflicts Department.

Take a break before you start at your new job. This is the only time in your career that you can take a vacation without having to check your email!