

## **Breaking Up and Making Up with an Ex-Employer**

**Trying to get back with a former employer may be just as complicated as trying to get back with an ex-girlfriend or boyfriend**

There may come a time when the prospect of another job seems rosier than it actually is. You may jump ship for better salary or a brighter career path – sellable elements of a job description that might have bought you over. But in just over a week of filling out the shoes of your new role, you realise that those shoes are either too big, too small, or just not your style. The problem is that this is not a situation as easy to remedy as just going back to a salesman.

### **Making Sure of Your Decision**

It is prudent that you think hard and long before finally deciding you want your old job back. The grass will always be greener on the other side for those who are fickle, unfocused and rash.

What attracted you to this new job in the first place? New shoes start out stiff. Subsequent and consistent wearing stretches them to conform to your feet. If you have only just started work fresh at your new company, it could be that you haven't let yourself be properly adjusted and inoculated into the new environment. Being creatures of habit and stubborn to change, it is not uncommon to take more than a few weeks to get comfortable with a new status quo. Take some time to try out the shoes, and if you still find them a mismatch, then it's time to evaluate.

Here's some good advice: think long-term. Yes, company benefits are important in keeping employees smiling and striving, motivated and productive. But consider this—between a job that offers unlimited gym access as well as spa retreats every year end, and a job in a smaller company that is just gearing up for globalisation spelling opportunities to take part in fresh ventures, which would look better on your resume?

A good job contributes to a great career. You need a progression plan and an eye to recognise which job is more beneficial to you. The bottom line is being informed and sure. If you prefer your old job, it should be because you had a better shot at being somebody there.

### **Coming Back Full Circle**

So you've thought about it long and hard, and you've decided that your previous appointment outweighs the new. Going back obviously isn't like your first interview with them. You're not selling your talents; you're trying to convince them that you're a valuable asset and you've realised that they're your choice employer. How do you ensure that you stand a better chance of returning to your former fold?

#### **Have a Valid Explanation**

For starters, you need a good excuse for leaving and coming back. Be very careful with your choice of words. Don't say something like "They pay higher that's why I wanted to go," or "I thought, being such a big and famous company, there would be a lot of good perks. But I couldn't fit in." The honest approach can prove to put you in more favourable light. But it is advisable to generalise your reason for leaving and focus on your reason for wanting to return. "I wanted to see where that direction would take me, explore a different horizon. But

I realised this company provides me with what I truly want in a career. It's the best place for me to nurture my talents."

### **Re-instate Your Value to the Company**

More important than your reasons for wanting to come back, you need to remind your employers why you're worth it. Recognise that one major edge you have is your familiarity with the company's processes, philosophy and culture, as well as your job scope and know-how. It's less of a risk to them compared to new employees who will have to go through a thorough learning curve. Map out your achievements and skills, not just at your most recent endeavours, but also those you credited to your name when you were working for the company in question.

### **Don't Burn Bridges**

A major factor affecting your chance of rejoining begins from the point in time when you leave the company. It pays to maintain good relations at all times. It doesn't matter if you crossed paths with your boss or colleagues before. It will prove wiser to mend all wounds, resolve all conflicts and leave on a good note. There is no conceivable way in which maintaining good relations leads to unfavourable circumstances.

Besides, networking helps in more ways than in the event of a hopeful re-entry. It opens you up to the possibility of collaborations, acquiring leads, and sharing industry information, just to name a few.

### **Word-of-Mouth Advantage**

In marketing, word-of-mouth is one of the best convincers of a good product because it is independent of agenda on the part of the seller. For you, the only person you need word to get to is your boss. Call an influential buddy at your former work place up and sit him down for coffee. Update yourself with company news. Then express your wishes and request for him to do a little PR on your behalf. If he puts in the right words, half the battle is won. Do take note that your contact should preferably be one who has enough presence in the company to be heard if you want to get the attention of the person who matters.

### **The Virtue of Commitment**

Like a thoughtfully composed sweet serenade is to a courtship (even in the event of a hopeful patch-up), your approach should be carefully deliberated. Having worked there before, you should use your knowledge of the company to your advantage. Engineer your strategy to target what the company sees as important and in line with their general directions.

But every company values commitment. Once you have made the decision you believe is right, stick by it firmly and fulfilment will invariably follow. Wherever you decide to commit your career progression to, remember that the best relationships are those built upon mutual growth.

### **P.S.**

One last thing you should take note of, for those who left your company for a direct competitor, you might want to reconsider your intentions to return. No girlfriend or boyfriend would stand for it if an ex left for a nemesis.

*This article is contributed by Ms Annie Yap, CEO, The GMP Group.*