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WHITE PAPER

# The Reality of Counter Offers



# Why You Should Walk Away from that Pay Raise

*“A Raise Won’t Permanently Cushion Thorns in the Nest.”*

By Paul Hanson

Matthew Henry, a 17th-century English Pastor, once wrote, “Dangerous temptation comes to us in vivid colors, but it is only skin deep.” This expression also applies to counteroffers (those magnetic enticements designed to lure you back into the nest after you have decided it is time to fly away). As an executive recruiter, consultant, and publisher, I have uncovered countless horror stories (and provided a litmus test) that prove counteroffers should never, EVER be accepted. The extra money doesn’t sound bad, and it’ll be easier to stay. However, a survey of 200 professionals by the firm WSJ shows 80% of employees that accept a counteroffer leave within six months and 90% within a year. This survey proves money is not the answer to overcoming the problems that made you want to seek opportunities in the first place.

## Counteroffers **Damage Working Relationships**

Accepting a counteroffer is likely to damage your relationship with your current employer. After all, you’ve just told them you were leaving and are now only staying because they offered you more money. This action might cause them to question your loyalty and whether you’ll resign the second you receive a better offer.

Consider this, what really goes through a boss’ mind when someone quits?

- “This couldn’t be happening at a worse time.”
- “This is one of my best people, and if I let him quit now, it’ll ruin morale.”
- “Maybe I can keep him on until I find a suitable replacement.”

## Expect your Boss **to Make Emotional Counters**

(Some of these comments are common)

- “I’ve been meaning to tell you about the great plans we have for you, but it’s been confidential until now.”
- “The V.P. has you in mind for some exciting and expanding responsibilities.”
- “Your raise will go into effect next quarter, but we’ll make it effective immediately.”

Let’s face it. When someone quits, it’s a direct reflection of leadership. Unless you’re incompetent (or a pesky thorn), a manager might want to avoid allowing someone to leave until they’re ready to find a replacement. Bosses typically know which incentives to offer a burned-out person to keep them around longer.

## Consider This **Before Accepting an Offer:**

**Any situation that forces an employee to get an outside offer before the present employer considers a raise (or promotion, or better working conditions) should raise red flags.**

Most employees who accept a counteroffer feel “pushed out” of their current organization. And, sometimes, companies go as far as to create a contingency plan and start looking for someone to fill your position before you can find a better offer.



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