

10 Tips for Changing Job

- Making a smooth exit and a successful start -

(1) Tell your direct supervisor about your decision first.

This will demonstrate your trust in him or her. By doing this, you also give him the chance to react in a sovereign manner and not be caught off guard when faced with his supervisor. You could benefit from your decision to be open and honest when your direct supervisor writes your reference certificate - a document that will primarily be his responsibility. Do not try to negotiate at this time and be candid about your decision to leave. Any open or hidden attempts to pressure your boss for a raise or other benefits will rarely lead to success.



(2) Consistently plan the transfer of any current, upcoming, and open-ended projects.

Even if not specifically asked to do so, start transferring all important information to your colleagues and anyone else who will take over your job when you leave. This preplanning will be especially helpful during your last few days of work when you will have to keep an overview of tasks and set priorities for your replacement. By planning ahead, nobody can accuse you of having left a mess for somebody else to clean up. Think of ways in which you can create detailed summaries of your individual tasks. A few things you should include:

1. Objective of the task
2. What has been completed thus far
3. What needs to be done by whom and by when
4. What facts need to be considered
5. Known shortfalls / problems with the project

(3) Write your own job reference certificate.

Do not leave your reference certificate at the mercy of a standardized letter from the personnel department. Ask your supervisor for permission to write your own draft of the certificate. In this way, you facilitate a discussion of your performance early enough and to your advantage. Take the writing of this document very seriously. It will later be the most important document you have to prove your past performance and it can serve as a reference for future applications. It is very important, especially in smaller companies where formal performance appraisals and job descriptions are not always available, to discuss the contents of your reference certificate before leaving the company. This is the only way that you can assure having any influence on changes that you wish to have made in the certificate. Certificates that are written after you leave will usually not be changed, or your former employer will only allow for one changed version. You legally only have the right to one single change. Books and software exist to help you formulate the text, which often contains code phrases that can be very difficult to decipher.

(4) Inform all of your colleagues at the same time and in the same manner.

Also, be sure not to leave any information-gaps that could cause speculation or gossip. It is best to confer with your boss on a time for announcing your decision and about the reason you will give for leaving. Try to present the subject clearly and decisively.

- (5) **Do not throw a pompous party to celebrate leaving.**
These are rarely moments to celebrate, especially in the eyes of your employer. In fact, such a celebration could even be considered lost work time by your supervisor. If you do decide to plan a small celebration, an appropriate time for it would be at the end of the work day on your last day. An invitation to such a get together should include mention of your appreciation for the time you spent with your colleagues and team.
- (6) **Your departure will be the start of a new chapter in your life,**
and you need to be sure to conduct yourself in a professional manner when leaving. Many feel they have the right to be obnoxious or speak their minds during their last few days. Others want to get revenge for any injustices they feel they may have suffered while working for an organization. Keep in mind, however, that you would not be doing yourself any favors by behaving in this manner. In fact, this would just leave a negative impression of your time at the company in both your eyes and those of your employer.
- (7) **The first day at your new job.**
Dress appropriately and in a neutral tone. If you are not sure what to wear, it is better to dress elegantly – first impressions are lasting impressions. This holds true whether you are starting at the management level or not. Approach your colleagues in a polite and reserved manner. Save chatting for a later time, like during the lunch break. Use any “down time“ during your first days to study the organizational structure, to familiarize yourself with your new work environment and get to know your colleagues. What jobs are your colleagues working on? Take down any questions that might occur to you in the first few days. Then, as you go about learning the ropes, look for the answers to these questions.
- (8) **Asking for help is better than waiting to be acknowledged.**
New colleagues are often seen as extra workers that weren't really needed until a few days ago. In this case, there are usually two behavior patterns that can be observed when a new colleague enters a team. The new colleague is either ignored by the others because everyone is already swamped in work, or, he or she is given “slave work“ because it does not require a lot of explanation and is considered annoying to others. In both cases, a new employee will often be faced with quite a bit of frustration, which threatens one's initial motivation. A good way for an employer to avoid this motivation problem in new employees, is to assign a mentor who can answer any questions the new colleague may have and accompany them during their introduction to the company.
- (9) **Design a structured plan for learning the ropes.**
Systematic is the best method for learning a new topic intensively and efficiently. In the first step of this process, any colleagues who will be working directly with the new employee should introduce themselves and present their areas of responsibility. At the latest, these meetings should take place in the second week at the company and should ideally take about 30 minutes for each department or work area. The best way to relay this information is in one-on-one discussions with the new employee.

Try to make yourself useful as soon as possible. Some of the first things you will have to worry about are getting a company ID, making sure your computer is set up correctly, and creating an E-Mail address. As soon as you have access to the Internet and other important departmental computer drives, use any time you may have to browse through the different work areas. It is also a good idea to immediately create an archive for any new passwords or access codes.

- (10) Document any recognized difficulties** or obscurities that you encounter, and make a weekly check to see if you are filling in these knowledge gaps and learning more each week. This collection of personal assessments can also be used later for a performance appraisal, especially when a comparison of target and actual performance is needed. It is also a good idea to keep arguments and examples at hand that can help you out when a certain project is not going as you or your boss expected.

Good luck with your new job!

Viel Erfolg im neuen Job!

Look for more information on job searches and related topics at:

<http://www.german-business-etiquette.com/>

* Reference: This article will be found in the future edition of the book "Mind your manners – Tips for business professionals visiting Germany", bilingual German/English, ISBN 3-89577-292-5, currently 3rd. Edition 2006, 336 pages, paperback, price: € 29

<http://www.german-business-etiquette.com/> and <http://www.business-knigge.com/>