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I Quit!: The Best and Worst Ways to Leave a Job



by *Kenya McCullum* | April 26, 2012

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He was a bully, and I couldn't take it anymore. During the short time I worked there, I had been yelled at in front of my coworkers several times, put down repeatedly for my job performance (though given no real guidance on how to improve it) and condescended to on an almost daily basis.

So, when my boss screamed at me in front of everyone for accidentally putting mail in the wrong box, I'd had enough. After taking a five minute break to get some fresh air and think about the latest episode in my workplace humiliation, I marched into the office, grabbed my purse from my desk and walked out without a word -- which was my nonverbal way of screaming "I QUIT" back at my bully boss.

Although many workers may fantasize about [quitting](#) the way I did, it's probably not the best choice -- no matter how much of a bully your boss is. Instead, a better way of handling being yelled at publicly is to discuss your concerns before you walk out the door.

"I think it's always best to talk before you tantrum," said Nancy A. Shenker, author of "Don't Hook Up with the Dude in the Next Cube: 200+ Career Secrets for New Grads." She explains, "You might end up walking out the door anyway, or getting fired, but at least you can say in future job interviews that you sat down with your boss and had the conversation."

She's right. I should have spoken up before I did a Greta Garbo in the middle of the office. Luckily for me, no potential employer had any way of knowing this story -- that is, until I fessed up to it now -- because I pulled this stunt long before the social media revolution. Of course, nowadays, employees probably won't be so lucky.

"With so many people really taking to social media, and people being connected in a way that has never been done before, a lot of these incidents can end up on the Internet minutes after they've happened -- and it's something that employees really need to be cognizant of because it can come around and haunt them later," said Suki Shah, Founder and CEO at GetHired.com

Do's and don'ts of quitting a job

The last thing you want is to get a reputation for being a bad quitter. These tips can help you leave a job in a more professional manner -- and ensure that the way you left doesn't become fodder on [Facebook](#).

When you're looking for a new job

Do use your best judgment. In some companies, openly job hunting can get you escorted out the door. If you work in that type of environment, keep a lid on your plans -- especially if you work with gossipy people. Remember, it just takes one person to rat you out and possibly send you packing.

Don't be dishonest. Some employers are a lot more understanding when their workers are ready to move on to different opportunities. If that's the kind of environment that you work in, honesty is the best policy.

"Most employers recognize that people are always open to new opportunities. For example, with the prominence of [LinkedIn](#), a lot of times you'll even see executives at corporations put in their profiles that they're looking for job opportunities," said Shah. "Most employers understand that it is very normal for employees to have many careers over their lifetime these days. Some employers, especially in places where the job market is competitive, will do everything they can to retain good employees -- so if you feel like you need more engagement or more responsibility, clearly communicating your frustrations to your employer may actually benefit you."

What to do when you've found a job

Do tell your boss first that you're leaving. No boss wants to hear through the grapevine that an employee is

leaving, so give your employer the courtesy of telling them first. Also, find out if your boss wants to be the one to break the news to everyone else.

Don't trash talk. If you didn't have a good experience at your job, you may be tempted to badmouth your boss and the company during your last weeks there. Despite your feelings, your best bet is to keep a lid on it. Don't forget that you can still be let go -- or someone can get word to your new employer.

Do offer to help with the transition. Anything you can do to make your transition out of the company a smooth one -- such as helping to hire and train your replacement and wrapping up all of your projects -- will make your employer appreciate you and remember you fondly.

Don't forget to stay in touch. It's always a good idea to have one or two people at each place you've worked who will give you a glowing [reference](#) when you need one. Also, since people frequently move around to different organizations, staying on their radar can open up new opportunities for you later.

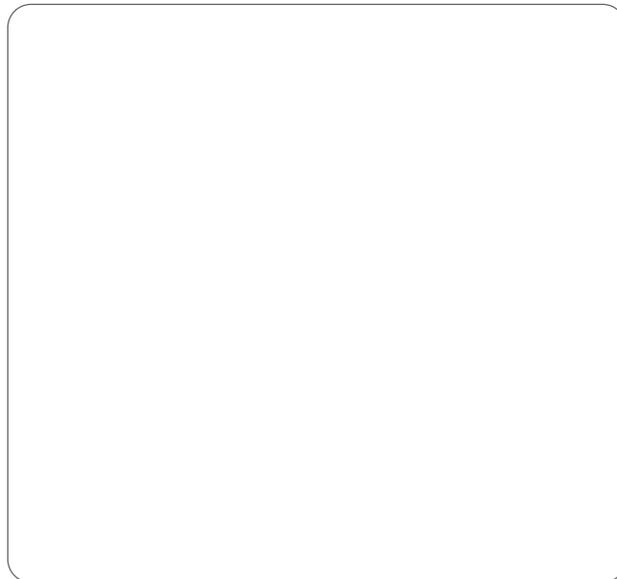
"If you stay in the same industry, you will keep running into the same people over and over again throughout your career," said Shenker. "It's always a good idea to become that person that people want to carry around in their briefcase from job to job."

About the Author

Kenya McCullum is a freelance writer based in California.

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