

Backing Out on an Accepted Job Offer

Written by Peter Post



I recently accepted a job offer. My start date is next week. I was interviewing with another company, which just invited me back to the second interview. I am more interested in the other company. How can I gracefully back out of the offer already accepted?

Gracefully? Probably not. What if the company offered you the job and you accepted? And what if the company later informed you that they had a better candidate? They're going to hire that person, and you no longer have a job with them. That would be difficult. Once a commitment has been made, it's up to both parties to honor it.

They acted in good faith and offered you a job you were willing to accept. Your renegeing puts them in a difficult position. Once you accepted, they began contacting candidates they rejected when you accepted. Now, they must contact those people again and reopen the search.

Can you back out? Yes, you can, but there are consequences.

You will be burning a bridge. Your reputation with the company that you are leaving in the lurch will suffer. You must certainly will not be able to go back there to seek employment again. Five or ten years in the future, you may be applying for a job somewhere else and discover that the person who hired you is now the hiring person at that company. Finally, you are risking a guaranteed job for one you might not get. You may end up with no job.

There is a way to avoid this situation. One of the first steps successful job seekers should take is contacting other potential employers and letting them know you have accepted a position elsewhere. No bridges get burned, no tempting opportunities suddenly develop.

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