

The right way to quit your job

A dramatic exit might be fun to dream about, but keep it tactful

BY BRIAN J. O'CONNOR
Detroit News Finance Editor

With a stolen beer grasped in each hand, former JetBlue flight attendant Steven Slater slid down an airplane emergency chute and into American workers' frustrated, burned-out hearts.

In our fantasies, we want to be Slater and quit in the same kind of resounding "take-this-job-and-shove-it" style. In reality, many of us will quit just as soon as the economy turns around — but we'll be better off to do it with a lot more tact.

According to reports, Slater reached his on-the-job frustration level arguing with a passenger, announced his resigna-

tion over the plane's public address system, grabbed two beers from the galley, deployed the emergency escape chute and slid out of a job he'd grown to hate.

He's not alone. As soon as the economy gets better, a third of us who've held on to our jobs are ready and waiting to tell the boss, "I'm outta here!"

That's according to the 2010 Ethics & Workplace Survey from consultants Deloitte LLP. The study found almost half of the workers who are ready to walk away because they've lost trust in their employers during the recession.

If the slowly recovering economy should give you a chance to exit, resist the urge to deploy your version of the emergency slide, and just walk out gracefully, says executive coach Prudence Cole of Being@Work in Grosse Pointe.

"What's the point of making a big scene? You never know when you'll run into that boss again," says Cole. "I think it's best to say, 'Thanks a lot, it's time for me to leave' and just say good-bye."

If you're on the verge of quitting in a fit, stop and consider why you're so frustrated and what will fix it, Cole adds.

"Pinpoint the source of unhappiness," she says. "In many cases, it's not the employer, it's actually a misalignment in the type of work the person is doing or the environment the person is in."

Cole says for a change in employment to succeed, you have to be running toward what you want, not simply running away from what you hate.

"It's important that the individual understand what's wrong as opposed to just blaming the company or the circumstances," she says. "If they aren't clear about the source of their discomfort, they'll end up repeating it. I can guarantee the next job won't be any better."

If you know what you want and why you're leaving, you can walk out with rancor — or something worse. In the case of JetBlue's Slater, a criminal charge got him arrested and locked up overnight before he made bail on charges of criminal mischief, reckless endangerment and criminal trespass.

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Diana McNary
The Detroit News

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