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### It's not so hard to say goodbye

M. THULASIDAS

Singapore Management University, manojt@smu.edu.sg

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# IT'S NOT SO HARD TO SAY GOODBYE

Staff resignations are a fact of life, so bosses, learn to deal with it

DR MANOJ THULASIDAS  
news@newstoday.com.sg

HOLD on to your pants! Your key staff has just tendered his resignation – your worst nightmare as a manager.

Once the dust settles and the panic subsides, you ask yourself, what next?

Staff retention is a major problem in the job market here. Our economy is doing well; our job market is red hot. As a result, new job offers are becoming more irresistible.

At some stage, someone you work closely with – be it your staff, your boss or a fellow team member – is going to hand in that dreaded letter to the human resource (HR) department. Handling resignations with tact and grace is no longer merely a desirable quality, but an essential corporate skill today.

Of course, the HR manual tells how

to deal with resignations. The first step is to examine the why and the wherefores.

Is it money? If so, a counter-offer is usually successful. Counter-offers (both making them and taking them) are considered ineffective and in poor taste. At least, executive search firms insist they are. But then, they would say that, wouldn't they?

If the motivation behind the resignation is the nature of the current or future job and its challenges, a lateral movement or reassignment, possibly combined with a counter-offer, can be effective. If everything fails, then it is time to say goodbye – amicably.

It is vitally important to maintain this amicability – a fact often lost on bosses and HR departments. Understandably so, because by the time the counter-offer



negotiations fail, rancour would have built up on both sides to sour the relationship.

Brush those wounded feelings aside and smile through your pain, for your paths may cross again. You may rehire the same person. Or, you

may end up working with him or her on the other side.

Salvage whatever little you can for the sake of positive networking.

The level of amicability depends on the corporate culture. Some organisations are so cordial with deserting employees they almost encourage desertion. Others treat the traitors as the army used to – by sending them to face a firing squad.

Both these extremes come with

their associated perils. If you are too cordial, your employees may treat your organisation as a stepping stone, concentrating on getting only transferable skills. On the other extreme, if you develop a reputation for severe exit barriers in an attempt to discourage potential traitors, you may also find it hard to recruit top talent.

The right approach lies somewhere in between, like most good things in life. It is a cultural choice an organisation has to make.

But regardless of where the balance is found, resignation is here to stay and people will change jobs. Change, as the much overused cliché goes, is the only constant.

*The writer is the author of *The Unreal Universe: A Study in Applied Spirituality*. A scientist from European Center for Nuclear Research, Dr Manoj has worked in particle physics and neuroscience. He also heads the Quantitative Analytics team in OCBC.*