Resigning with Class

Once you've successfully completed the process of searching for a new career opportunity, i.e., you've run the gauntlet of interviews, completed all negotiations for the new position and have officially been made the offer for the new position and have accepted that offer, then comes the BIG moment – the time to submit your resignation to your current employer.

(And, a note of caution here: Under no circumstance should you resign your current position before you have a new one! If you do make this strategic mistake, obtaining new employment, at anywhere near the same compensation, becomes considerably much more difficult.)

How you handle the delicate matter of resigning from your current position can have long-lasting effects on your future career, so handle it with extreme care. And what’s the best way to handle it? With class!

Regardless of how thoroughly fed up you may be with your current employer, never, never, never use the resignation process as an opportunity to "vent your spleen," to "get even." Even though it may not seem to be the case at the time, the only real loser if you take this approach is YOU! Remember the admonition against "burning bridges"? Well, it's still true!

Resignation a two-part process

Ideally, resignation involves both an in-person meeting with your immediate supervisor, human resources department, or others, and a written letter of resignation. Both types of communication should be kept at the highest level of professionalism, focusing exclusively on the positive, not the negative.

At the in-person meeting, for example, you might stress how much you have appreciated opportunities you've had to learn new things at the current employer. But be firm that you have nonetheless determined that it is in your best career interests to take advantage of the many opportunities offered in your new position. You might also say how much you enjoyed working with many of the employees in your current position. Obviously, there are a number of positive things you could use to preface the conversation.

At the end of this in-person meeting is when you hand-deliver your letter of resignation.

What reaction are you likely to get from your current employer? Certainly, there is no one answer to that question. It could be anger, resentment, disappointment, acceptance... Whatever the reaction proves to be, just remember to maintain your positive approach to the situation. Keep in mind that you have absolute control over your own emotions and very little control on the emotions of others.