

# Declining an Offer

*by Roger Manning*

Depending how you decline a job offer will define your character. If working with the services of a Search Consultant, you should not be getting to the point of accepting a job offer to find out that there are surprises big enough to cause you to decline an offer. If you are working on your own without the assistance of a Search Consultant, you may find that you are in the situation of receiving a job offer without having all the facts to make a proper decision. Some employers become so focused on their interview process that they fail to make sure that all of your questions and needs are addressed. I want to address both of these scenarios.

## Working Through Search Consultants/Recruiters

- A point to remember: The Search Consultant represents the client employer and is doing everything they can to work towards meeting your needs as well as the employers. The Search Consultant does not want to deliver a candidate to the job offer stage and have a turn-down. This causes a break in their credibility with their client.
- You should cooperate fully with the Search Consultant by being honest about your needs and at what point you will accept or decline an offer. This includes your minimum base salary expectations, possible negotiations on other perks like company car plans, vacations time, stock options, etc. The Search Consultant strives to make the employer informed of what it takes to make a successful offer. If you must turn down the job offer after this kind of mutual cooperation, then both the Search Consultant and the employer knew where you stood from the beginning. Your demands should be reasonable however for the type of position and competitive nature of the industry.
- NEVER go on interviews if you are not serious about entertaining a job offer with the company. You should be able to make that assessment by the end of the second interview.
- NEVER go on interviews to obtain job offers just to manipulate your current employer for possible [Counter-Offers](#). You are well advised to understand the negative ramifications of this "career-ending" strategy. Declining a job offer under these circumstances leaves you with the reputation of being a "player" and deceitful. Depending on the employer that you interview with and what industry you work within, this strategy could hurt your reputation with the other competitive companies as well as the leading Search Consultants who are in that industry.

## **Interviewing Through Your Own Efforts**

If you have obtained a job offer through your own efforts, you obviously do not have a Search Consultant to be your liaison or consultant about any possible issues. You must be diplomatic, courteous and respectful at all times. If the offer is disappointing, it's tempting to verbally turn down an offer and skip writing a letter, but it's more professional to write a formal letter to decline the offer.

If you are definitely interested in the employer and this opportunity but you have a disappointing job offer, you may want to consider discussing your disappointment and see if you can negotiate a better offer. Don't be attempted to totally turn-down the offer just yet for fear of alienating your potential new employer.

- State that you are very interested in the company and you find the job opportunity to be exciting and meeting your career goals;
- State that you are disappointed that the company cannot meet your financial needs; if you are willing to compromise, state clearly what you will consider to make the job offer acceptable; if there is no compromise because you have already set the minimum limit and the employer has not met it, you must be respectful and diplomatically state that you must decline the offer. You will however reconsider accepting employment if they can improve the offer within these specific areas.
- Be prepared to justify your reasons for any increased demands. You simply cannot arbitrarily decide that you are worth more based upon your emotions and positive feelings about your past success. Be prepared to point out what the competition is paying for similar positions. Be prepared to turn past success with your employer into dollars and sense for your new employer.

Whether working through the Search Consultant or through your own efforts, keep these four tips in mind if you must decline the job offer and as you write your letter:

### **Be Prompt.**

As soon as you've made your decision, call the hiring manager and Search Consultant and then write your letter declining the offer. The company will need to offer the position to someone else, and you don't want to hold up the process.

### **Be Courteous.**

Your letter should be professional and courteous. You may be turning down this position, but you might want to be considered for future opportunities. Savvy job seekers use every possible chance to network, so thank each person with whom you interviewed and wish them and their company continued success. Be sure to point out how much you enjoyed their interview process but you are seeking something that offers more in line with your needs. Do not discuss your needs in this letter.

### **Be Diplomatic.**

If you've received another, more generous offer, avoid mentioning the details of the position you're accepting. Let the hiring manager know that you were impressed by the company and carefully considered the offer, but you are accepting a position that better suits your career objectives.

**Be Concise.**

This is not the place to tout your credentials and career accomplishments. The company already realizes your value, so keep your letter short and sweet.

Be careful that all emotion is eliminated from your letter. Some people have the tendency to let emotion take over and say more than they should. The more you say, the more the chance for leaving an undesirable impression. As a general rule, stick with the facts.

**Other related resources to review regarding this topic:**

[Disappointing or Lowball Offers – Now What?](#)

[Position Comparison Guide](#)

[Position Compensation Guide](#)

[Ten Reasons For Not Accepting a Counter-Offer](#)

[Wall Street Journal: Never Accept A Counter-Offer](#)