

# FEARLESS SALARY NEGOTIATION



A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE  
TO GETTING PAID  
WHAT YOU'RE WORTH

JOSH DOODY

# Fearless Salary Negotiation

A step-by-step guide to getting  
paid what you're worth

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## SAMPLE

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# How to leave a job on the best possible terms

*Leaving a job isn't nearly as exciting as getting or starting one, but it's just as important. After your first job, every job you start will be preceded by one you left. And, more importantly, you'll get many of your jobs through contacts from previous jobs.*

Sometimes, you'll leave a job because you found a much better opportunity, and you're really excited about starting a new chapter in your career. Sometimes, you'll leave because you were laid off, or fired, or because it just wasn't a good fit for you. Regardless of why you're leaving, the most important thing is that you do it gracefully. Why? Because people know people, and they talk to people, and they will talk about *you*. And when they talk about you, you want to be absolutely sure that they only have great things to say.

So how do you make sure that people only have great things to say about you after you leave a job? Here are some general principles that you should review every time you leave a job. Do these things and people will think very highly of you after you've left.

# Getting let go from my second full-time job

My second job was a good job at a small, private company, and I was surrounded by good people. And then, six weeks later, we were acquired by a mid-sized public company. A couple years later, that company was acquired by a private equity firm, taken private, and the overhaul began. There was a round of layoffs every few months, and it became pretty obvious my team wasn't safe. Eventually, they let most of my team go and I experienced my first layoff.

I was obviously frustrated, but what was done was done. I asked my boss what I could do to help button everything up before I left. I tied up a lot of loose ends, and generally went out of my way to make sure the project I had been working on for the past six months was well documented and ready for whoever would take it over. I left on excellent terms and didn't say anything foolish on my way out the door.

Fortunately, I had a little money saved up, and my company gave me a decent severance package. I spent the next few months sort of looking for work, and generally enjoying unemployment. I had no idea what I would do next, but at least I had some time to think about it.

# Landing my third full-time job

About three months later, I got a call from a manager at the company that had recently laid me off. I had never met him before, but he had heard about me: “Josh, I’m building a Support team in Gainesville. So far it’s just me, but we’re establishing a Gainesville headquarters. I was wondering if you’d be interested in helping me build the team. I’ve heard really good things about you and I think you would be a good fit.”

This was surprising for a few reasons. First, I had never worked with the product this team would be supporting. I had worked at the company, but in a totally different area. Second, I had *no* meaningful experience in Support. I had worked in a couple call centers right after high school, but those jobs hadn’t been on my résumé in many years. Third, I’d never been a manager or hired anyone. I wouldn’t technically be a manager in the new role, but I would be directly responsible for interviewing and making go/no-go recommendations for hiring people to build out the team.

So, why did he call me? It was a combination of two things: my reputation for taking on new challenges and, more importantly, because I had been very careful to leave on good terms without burning any bridges when I had been laid off.

While at the company the first time, I had worked hard to contribute where I would be most useful. My final role was a “special project”, which I knew was risky, but which the company had made a priority. When I took that role, I moved one step up the company’s org chart, took on more

responsibility, and took on a lot more risk. This earned me a reputation as a guy who could be counted on to take on new challenges, even if the payoff was uncertain.

But that wouldn't have mattered if I had left the company on bad terms. There were a lot of things I could've said or done on my way out that would've been very cathartic. They *had* laid me off, after all. And after I had taken on an important special project to boot! But I was careful to leave on good terms, to tie up loose ends, and to make sure my previous project was well documented for my successor. That was at least as important as my prior reputation.

I would eventually get two more jobs because of my reputation with that company. I didn't pursue either of them—they both found me.

## **Leave on the best possible terms, even if you feel slighted**

### **Ask your manager and coworkers what you can help with before you go**

I was let go during the third round of layoffs that year. Earlier the same year, in the second round of layoffs, a very reliable coworker (let's call him Jim) was let go. They gave him the bad news in the morning, and told him he had until the end of the day to clear everything out and wrap things up.

He immediately emailed my boss and me—he had been supporting us on that special project—to let us know he had been let go. But, more importantly, he also told us he was working to give us credentials to all the servers, databases, folders, etc., that we would need to take everything off his plate. He even put together a document with passwords, URLs, network addresses, instructions, etc. He left us a full manual to use once he was gone.

He didn't have to do that. He could've just said, "Well, I guess that's it for me," powered down his laptop and signed off for the day. No one would've faulted him for just clocking out and leaving the rest of us to fend for ourselves. Instead, he took care to make sure his coworkers had everything they needed to continue his projects in his absence.

But that's not the end of the story. A few years later, a friend of mine heard that Jim was looking for a job and had applied to her company. "Do you remember Jim? He's looking for work and just applied at my company. What do you think?" I said, "Hire him immediately!" Then I told her the story I just told you. Jim had been very good at his job, but he had also demonstrated exceptional character and reliability in the worst of circumstances. He's working for my friend's company now and he's a superstar.

**Document the projects you're working on to  
prepare your successor**

The best anecdote I have for this one is the same one I just shared with you. Jim is the prototype here—do what he did.

## **Bundle up relevant documentation, emails, etc., and save them somewhere others can get to them**

In 2014, I decided it was time for a change, and I moved on to a new company and a new opportunity. Before I left, I found out who would be replacing me on each of my projects, and I sent them a .zip file with everything they would need to know about the projects they were inheriting. I sent them documentation, relevant email trails, specs, files—anything they *might* need after I was gone. I wanted to make sure the clients I had worked with would perceive the transition to be silky smooth.

A few months later, I heard through the grapevine that one of my old projects was having some trouble. Nobody could find the contract and statement of work, and they needed those documents to resolve some discrepancies between the client's and company's interpretation of the project's scope.

I had worked on that project for a year, but it pre-dated me by about 18 months. When I first inherited it, I ran into similar issues locating the contract, statement of work, and other documentation describing our responsibilities and deliverables for the project. So I spent a Saturday morning looking for all that documentation and bundling it up.



“I sent all that stuff to Ben before I left. Tell him to look for an email from me in March. There should be a big .zip file attached to it, and the client’s name is in the subject. The contract and SOW are in that .zip file.” A few days later, I got word that everything was there, just like I said. If I hadn’t sent that .zip file, that information may have been lost forever. I saved the company a lot of grief and managed to bolster my reputation at the same time.

Even if your company already has everything stored in the cloud, you can still put together a single document that points to everything your successor will need.

## **Make sure to quickly return all your equipment in good shape**

If your company loaned you a laptop, mobile phone, headset, monitor, keyboard, printer, iPad or other equipment, make sure you ask what you need to return, and how you can return it. Many companies will tell you to just keep some stuff (especially printers), but don’t assume you should keep anything. Assume you should return everything, and only keep things they explicitly tell you to keep.

And think about the IT person who will receive that box. Don’t just randomly throw a bunch of stuff in there and ship it. Be sure to include a Post-It with your laptop password, your mobile phone PIN, and other bits of information they may need to access those devices and reset them. Ask

yourself, “If I had to open this box and process all this stuff, how would I want it to be packaged?” and do that.

## **Reach out to your closest coworkers before you leave to make sure they’re part of your network**

You should also reach out to your closest coworkers—the ones you would IM to make snarky jokes when something funny happened—and personally tell them that you’re leaving. They may feel slighted if they don’t hear from you, and you want to leave on the best possible terms.

While you’re reaching out to your closest coworkers, make sure you have their personal contact information so you can keep in touch. They may be the ones who find a big opportunity for you later on, and you want to make sure they can find you when they do. Your network is one of your most valuable assets when it comes to finding good opportunities, and this is a great chance to extend it before you leave.

## **Reach out to your colleagues to say goodbye and share your contact information**

This is a pretty standard practice nowadays. Usually, people put together an email to their team, or practice, or department, tell them it was great working with them, they’ll be missed, and to reach out if they ever need anything. This is about 50% genuine and 50% networking.

The genuine part is that you're giving your former coworkers a way to find you if they run into an issue with one of your old responsibilities. The networking part is that you're sharing your name, email address and phone number so that your coworkers have your contact info in case they find an awesome job you would be right for.

Here's a short example you can use to say goodbye and make sure your former coworkers know how to find you if they need to. This is a real email—slightly modified—that I sent when I left a great job in 2015.

**To:** ACME Corp—Consulting Practice

**CC:** Josh Doody <josh@example.com> [personal email address]

**Subject:** See you around!

Hi everyone

Today is my last day working with this amazing team at this amazing company. It has been a pleasure working with all of you, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to work with such a great team of experts. The amount of talent in this group is really astounding.

I've been in this industry for almost 10 years now, and I've learned that this is a very tight-knit industry where I continuously bump into old friends. I'm sure we'll cross paths again, and that's very comforting given how great this team is.

If you ever need anything or have any questions for me about any of my projects or responsibilities please reach out and ask. Don't spin your wheels trying to figure something out when you could just email me for a quick answer!

And of course, please stay in touch and feel free to reach out at any time to say hello.

My personal email address is: [josh@example.com](mailto:josh@example.com)

I'm on LinkedIn at: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/joshdoody>

Thank you for this tremendous opportunity, and for making this such a fantastic place to work!

All the best

Josh

## **Be vague and use positive language in your exit interview**

When I left my first job, I was frustrated and a little disillusioned. I didn't think my boss had helped me find opportunities I wanted, and I realized that my own performance didn't matter.

So I started looking for a new job in a new industry. I applied for two jobs and landed one pretty quickly. Adios, old job!

I gave notice and began ticking off the list of things I had to do before I left: wrap up open projects, say goodbye to friends and colleagues... complete an online exit interview? What's that? I looked it over and saw that the company wanted me to give them anonymous feedback about my experience and tell them why I was leaving.

*Ah ha! It's ANONYMOUS?! The perfect opportunity to tell them how I really feel! I'll tell them all about this crummy assignment I had to do, and how my boss wouldn't give me any cool opportunities and... Hmm. I wonder who will read this? To Google!*

Google told me to cool my jets—the exit interview is not the place to let off steam or, as my friend Rob would say, "go out in a blaze of glory". So I backed off and gave some general feedback—hard to find interesting projects, considering a career change, that sort of thing—without going into too much detail.

It wasn't very satisfying, but Google said it was the prudent thing to do.

On my last day, I stopped by my boss' office to give him my badge and say goodbye.

I sat down across from him, and he reached out and picked up a small stack of papers. "So I read your exit interview..." *What? That was supposed to be*

*anonymous!* I panicked a little bit, remembering what I wanted to say on that form. Then I remembered that I had backed off and sanitized everything I wrote. "...It's too bad we couldn't find something more challenging for you, but I'm sure you'll find something you enjoy at your next job."

Well, that could've been awkward. If I had written what I really wanted to say in the exit interview, our final conversation could have gone much differently.

## **Things to consider when completing an exit interview**

I'll leave you with three specific things to consider when completing an exit interview:

- **DO focus on yourself and your own needs.** "I'm ready for a new challenge" or "I found a new opportunity that I think will be a good fit for me." This way, you can give the company some insight into your decision without pointing any fingers. This is easier if you focus on using positive language.
- **DON'T focus on others or the company.** Don't say things like, "The company culture just wore me down" or "My boss didn't give me enough support." It might feel good at the time, but probably won't change anything and could hurt you later. This is easier if you avoid negative language.

- **DO remember that the exit interview will likely stay in your file, and may be read by others at the company.** If I had been harsh in my exit interview, what could have happened? What might my old boss say if he was called to verify my previous employment? He probably wouldn't explicitly mention the exit interview, but he might hesitate when answering questions about me. That wouldn't be good.

## Summary

Leaving a job is as important as starting one. It's a final opportunity to leave a positive impression on your coworkers and build a bridge from one job to another, as opposed to burning the bridge behind you on your way out.

When you leave a job, be conscientious, focusing on the needs of the coworkers you're leaving behind. Leave on good terms and make sure you button things up so that whoever picks up where you left off will have an easy time of it.

Leaving a job properly can go a very long way to boosting your reputation so that you're top of mind when your former coworkers are looking for new colleagues in the future.

## **A short summary of things to do when leaving a job**

## **Leave on the best possible terms, even if you feel slighted**

It's always difficult to put on a happy face when things aren't going well, but this is a time when you can really boost your reputation.

## **Ask your manager and coworkers what you can help with before you go**

Do this and you will make a lasting impression on your coworkers.

## **Document the projects you're working on to prepare your successor**

Your successor will have a much easier time absorbing your work, and they'll thank you for it.

## **Bundle up relevant documentation, emails, etc., and save them somewhere others can get to them**

Most companies are moving to cloud-based storage, so it may all be out there anyway. Even so, put together a master document that points to everything they'll need.

## **Make sure to quickly return all your equipment in good shape**

Most of the time, you are just borrowing company property. You should return it in good shape, just like you would want your own property returned if you lent it out.



## **Reach out to your closest coworkers before you leave to make sure they're part of your network**

Your network is one of your most valuable assets for finding future career opportunities.

## **Reach out to your colleagues to say goodbye and share your contact information**

If you've done all these things, you've left a great impression. Make sure your old coworkers know how to find you if they need someone like you in the future. And be sure to reach out to your closest coworkers to personally say goodbye whenever possible.

## **Be vague and use positive language in your exit interview**

Your exit interview is one of the times when being vague is necessary. You won't benefit by baring your soul on your way out, and the company isn't going to change because of your feedback. Keep it short, sweet, and surface-level.

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