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Don't tell the boss to stick it

With signs of economic recovery coinciding with [reports](#) that job dissatisfaction has hit a record high, is it finally time to tell the boss what you really think of your job?

Apparently many people think so - and some are quitting their jobs and burning bridges in the process. It seems that 82 per cent of workers have thought about changing jobs during the past 12 months, which is the highest level in three years.

But recruiters and outplacement specialists say many are mishandling the process by airing grievances and telling their boss more or less to 'stick it' when they find new opportunities.

Part of it, I suspect, is because of the well of resentment that built up during the downturn as people watched colleagues getting shafted, and now they want to get even. But as satisfying as that might be, the fact is that what goes around, comes around and you have to consider that you might one day wish to return to that company.

As career blogger [Penelope Trunk](#) says, you need to have the right frame of mind when you're leaving, regardless of whether you quit or were pushed. It's not so much about not burning bridges, as changing your mindset by seeing it as taking a risk and stepping into the unknown.

"If you are not sure about how to handle yourself when you get fired or laid off, look at how someone like Oprah who famously quit her job," Trunk writes. "Make a mental shift to thinking that you quit, and focus on tips for quitting, and then everything starts to become clear - yes, you send an email giving people your new contact info, you talk about how you're really excited about doing something new. Everyone gets laid off or fired at some point. It's how well you bounce back that defines who you are."

In a sign of the times, blogger [Rebecca Thorman](#) says the issue of burning bridges is not such a big deal because people change careers and locations so often it doesn't really matter. She believes that your old boss won't help you anyway, and you don't really need a reference as long as you have someone who can get you in through the door.

Still, specialists say you really need to be careful when you quit no matter how much you want to leave.

Jannine Fraser who runs [Directioneering](#), one of Australia's most highly regarded outplacement agencies, says you should take the following steps before resigning. The first is to take 24 hours to clear your head and get your thoughts in order.

The second, she says, is to find someone to talk to. "It's best this person is not your partner, who may feel even more aggrieved than you do," she says. "You need objectivity and sound counsel, not therapy. A good choice would be someone you can depend on for bluntness and honesty, and ideally, they've navigated more career miles than you have."

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She also suggests thinking of yourself as a brand, something I wrote about [here](#). She says you need to prepare an exit story where you focus not on the fact that you're leaving or something's ending, but more on where you're going to next. And avoid discussions that present you as aggrieved.

You also need to have a list of people in the organisation to notify because the grapevine lights up quickly and not always in your favour so these people can influence your future and may even provide some assistance.

And finally, respect intellectual property. The job market is filled with stories about people who have stolen important information from their previous employer, she says. Don't do it; it's theft and people will hear about it.

Other [advice](#) is to quit with a smile, give a decent amount of notice and keep busy until the day you leave. [Others](#) suggest you keep your decision private, resign in person and not by email, be polite, objective and without emotion. And after the fact, don't let your standards drop and start slacking off or heading out for long lunches.

Another reason why people should beware of burning bridges is that the economy may not yet be as strong as some may think.

While unemployment figures have been reported at [4.9 per cent](#), the ABS survey is based on a telephone sample of about 29,000 dwellings that cover about 0.33 per cent of the Australian population aged 15 years and older.

This defines an employed person as anyone who has worked for one hour during the week. One hour!! In addition to the casual workers included in this figure, ABS data also shows that there also 925,900 who are considered to have what is called "marginal attachment" to the labour force which means they're not officially unemployed but want to work.

When you do the sums then you find there is actually more than two million people still seeking work, which means you really do have to be careful about not burning bridges when you quit.