



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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The Confidence to Walk Away

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Do you:

- **Deliver an engaging, confident marketing message clearly and with a smile?**
- **Project genuine excitement about your goals?**
- **Position yourself for roles that truly fit your capabilities, rather than ‘under-selling’ yourself?**
- **Present yourself with clear, confident results statements?**
- **Ask for what you deserve, instead of holding back out of fear of rejection?**
- **Have the confidence to walk away when needed?**

Let’s look at that last point, particularly in reference to internal or external job interviews and sales / consulting presentations. What should you do when you’ve concluded that the job or the assignment isn’t what you want?

The standard advice is that there isn’t anything to turn down until you have an offer, so always go for

the offer. I believe there’s a powerful exception:

“If you don’t want to be that solution, then it’s better to admit it and save everyone time and effort.”

The strongest interviews and sales / consulting presentations come from the psychology that this is an exploration by BOTH parties, not just a chance for you to sell yourself no matter what.

If I’ve already gone through all of the time and effort to come up with an offer or assignment for you, and you turn it down, that’s a cost of business that I accept. But if when I make you the offer I conclude that you knew you weren’t interested early in the process, I’m likely to be just a little bit annoyed that you wasted my time - and I certainly won’t keep you in mind for some other opportunity or go out of my way to try to help you after that!

Admitting (in a very professional way) that you don’t want what that person has to offer is a far stronger position for maintaining him

or her as a strong potential networking contact or referral source. In fact, it can earn you a degree of respect for your honesty and integrity.

Admitting that you don't want the job can also sometimes lead to a conversation about what you really want, or what they might need to do to make it a role that might attract you.

I once interviewed someone who did just that in a job interview, and we went on to have a great conversation about the role he really wanted. I did my best to draw him a road map for how the job I was describing could lead to the product line manager role he really wanted, since the last person I hired was now one of our product line managers. And before he left that day, I came up with the highest possible compensation package I

could afford to offer to attract him to my operation.

Clearly walking away doesn't apply if you are seriously considering the job or assignment, and think there's at least some reasonable chance you might be interested, if the offer is the right one. In that case, you keep going for the offer. But if you KNOW it's not what you want, have the confidence to walk away. Make sure you do it very professionally, but do it.

Try out this goal for your next interview or sales / consulting presentation:

"To help the other party succeed by providing a solution that best meets the other party's needs. And have the confidence to walk away if you aren't or don't want to be that solution." ●

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