
OPINION

An Offer He Couldn't Refuse

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The 43-year-old product manager had three offers and faced the biggest decision of his career.

The experienced executive had spent many hours studying the operations of the two new companies and had endured the demanding interview process. The first offer was from a top-five global company, the second deal was from a smaller, privately owned EU company. Then at the last minute, his present company came to the party with a counter offer.

The big name company had the most attractive pipeline. Many of the best people were rushing to join this company as mid-career hires. Nobody really doubted this top-five global company would be top three in Japan before the end of the decade. However, the offer was a little less than his present salary.

The smaller company had a questionable pipeline, but offered two million jpy more than his current annual salary. Certainly the money was very attractive, however, the company was a target for acquisition.

Now he had to consider an offer from his old firm. There were many internal difficulties, poor pipeline and on-going law suites in the US, which added to low morale in Japan. An increase in salary and a promise of a better position was attractive but nothing was in writing. Only after being told of his departure, did this company seem to appreciate his talents. His present company's strategy was to pay 5-10 per cent above the market to keep its talented people.

A decision had to be made.

Salary versus pipeline? Changing companies? Negotiating and analyzing offers can be confusing and stressful.

There are a number of points he had to consider.

1. Company pipeline. Where is the company situated in terms of growth? Where is the company in world ranking v Japan? This will help determine the opportunity in Japan. If a company is ranked 10th in Japan but No.2 worldwide, this would indicate strong global resources and excellent opportunities in the world's second biggest Pharma market.

2. Salary. How does it compare to my current position? How much will I take home in my pocket at the end of 12 months? Overtime should be taken into the equation.

3. Reporting line. Are you going to be working with someone who you can learn a lot from? Will he/she be a mentor?

4. Career growth. Where will you be in three to five years? Will you learn new skills? Will you be challenged? Do you have a chance to manage people?

5. Accomplishments. Have confidence. What will you be able to accomplish at the new company? What can you accomplish in three to five years?

The product manager analyzed the three offers and went for less money but more opportunities.

At 43, he felt it was now time to join a strong marketing company with the chance of working on blockbuster products. By gaining experience in a growth company, the high salary of a smaller company would be there in the future.

The counter offer from his present company was quickly dismissed. "Too little, too late" he thought. "Why is it only now that I am leaving that I am getting a promotion?"

One way to help with this decision process is to fast forward your life three to five years. What would you like to be doing? What is your level of employment? Company environment?

Growth equals opportunity. Companies growing the quickest will have more opportunities and faster promotion opportunities. Within these companies, there are always new positions. Non-growth company employees have to wait for the senior person to leave or retire before a promotion is available. These jobs are then fiercely contested.

Companies that are changing and growing are attracting the top talent from other companies and offer the most interesting career opportunities. A growing company means the culture is not stagnant. With the acquisition of new companies and products, comes a new culture, which will add to the 'melting pot' nature of a growth company. Here are four questions that may help clarify your thoughts.

1. Is the company growing?
2. Are there new position?
3. Is the company changing through hiring new talent and acquiring new business?
4. Is the pipeline strong?