

## OPINION

## The Fine Art of Saying Sayonara

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After three months of meetings and negotiations the offer of a new job was given and the 40-year-old executive approached his old boss with the news. For more than 12 years he had worked tirelessly for his company, but now it was time to move on. He entered the chief executive's office at 3pm hoping it would be quick and painless but it took more than nine hours before he finally accepted that his highly valued employee was leaving. The candidate said it was one of the toughest experiences of his life.

Resigning in Japan is an art in itself. It is a country where the group, the company and respect to your elders and superiors are more important than the individual. So it is important to be strong, stay focused and stand behind your decision. I have identified the three stages of the resignation process that usually happens at a Japanese company.

1. Shock and disappointment. Your boss may be upset, jump up and down and make all types of strange noises. He might make you feel guilty and even offer you a better position. But we must ask ourselves, "Why did they not offer this before?" You've made your decision so stick with it. Be strong, the boss's outburst will not last. It is important to understand that people can be emotional and take things personally. However, after the initial shock, most will understand that it is your decision and that they will wish you the very best.

2. Acceptance. Your boss and colleagues will over time come to accept that you are leaving and this is

really happening. People will start to make plans for the transfer of your work and position. Life moves on. Nobody is irreplaceable.

3. Support. The company will support your decision and wish you well. They will focus on the excellent contribution you have made to the company. People will wish you well and want to stay in touch. In the end the people that matter will support you.

To make your resignation as smooth as possible, put it on paper. It is true that issues become more real and definite once they are on paper. Sign the offer letter and return it to your new company and then write your resignation letter. It is a simple letter thanking the old company for the great opportunities and experiences you have had with them.

The boss may have a temper tantrum, but remember you are at stage one. Be prepared have an extra copy of the resignation letter that he/she has just torn up.

The next step is to set a date. Organize a time to meet your boss to tell him or her the last day you will be working with the company. One month's notice is the norm. By setting a date it makes it real. It is a definite time. If our plans are vague then we can be easily swayed.

Finally, a candidate must not take criticism personally. Treat the whole process in a business fashion, even when your company may try manipulative tactics to get you to stay. At the end of the day, you are totally responsible for your own career.