THINKING OF MOVING TO A DIRECT COMPETITOR: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

You’ve found a job at a direct competitor of your current employer. Whether it’s for better pay, job security or career growth, this common scenario can be tricky sometimes. You must be thoughtful about how you handle the situation because it could define your professional reputation or jeopardize your future entirely.

Take these steps to navigate the muddy waters so you can find greener pastures ahead.

1. **Ensure the interview is genuine**
   It seems like a ploy from a movie: You get several interviews and talk endlessly about your current responsibilities only to learn there’s no job opening. It’s unethical — but not uncommon — for companies to interview their competitors’ employees in hopes of learning confidential information. Before talking to a competitor, it’s smart to make sure the potential job is genuine and that the information you share is fair and legal.

2. **Navigate the non-compete**
   Did you sign a non-compete when you started your job? It’s common practice in many industries, particularly at technology and research companies. Each contract is unique, of course, and many are nuanced. Read yours thoroughly and understand it well. Some may limit where you can work and others may state for how long. If you have any questions, consult a lawyer who specializes in labor laws. That last thing you want is to end up unemployed and in litigation over a violation.

3. **Get the offer in writing**
   Until you have an offer in hand don’t even consider submitting your notice. A verbal agreement is great for the ego, but such an offer is basically meaningless. A written offer, on the other hand, seals the deal so you can move onto the next step in your career with confidence. Make sure the offer includes imperative details like job title, responsibilities, salary and benefits.

4. **Write a formal letter of resignation**
   In the age of the Internet, email won’t due when it comes to a resignation letter. Type a thoughtful letter on your own time and be sure to include your name, the current date and the date that will be your last day of employment. A note of thanks and well wishes for the future make for a nice addition. Print the letter and give it to your supervisor personally.

5. **Meet with your supervisor privately**
   Meet with your boss one-on-one and give him or her your resignation letter. State your gratitude for your time at the company. Be open and professional throughout your conversations to project confidence and respect. Typically it’s best to share where you’re moving to; keeping it a secret appears intentionally deceitful. While your boss might feel disappointed or even angry, you should continue to demonstrate your honesty and integrity.

6. **Prepare to leave**
   Every company has different policies when employees quit, and some can be particularly sensitive when employees leave for competitors. You may, in fact, be asked to leave right after your meeting. If you’re allowed to stay through your notice period, use that time to wrap up projects and train the team to fill your role. Remember, how you act in the last days of work will make a lasting impression, so be sure to make it a good one.