



## TenStep Supplemental Paper

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### **Should You Hire Back on With a Former Employer?**

Once you make the decision to leave an employer, does it make sense to go back to work for them at a later time? Think about your former employers. Are there some that you would go back to work for, as well as some that you would avoid? If you have worked for a few companies, chances are that there are both kinds.

Some people will say that you should never go back to work for a prior employer. They say it never works out and that your position will be temporary at best. On the other hand, there are a number of people who were rehired by prior employers and who are still gainfully employed there.

There is no hard and fast rule about rehiring. You might think that you would just avoid rehiring with companies that you did not like working for, but even that isn't necessarily true. You might not have liked your position with a company, but later on there could be an opening in a different area with a different manager. Chances are that you might consider the opportunity.

If you look at the worst case, let's say you left a company because you did not like the work, the manager or your co-workers. You would never go back, right? However, two years later, you find yourself unemployed and your old company would like to hire you back. Do you tell them to go jump in a lake? Depending on what your other options are, you may consider it. Remember, considering a position is not the same as accepting the position.

From an employee perspective, then, you should always try to leave a company on good terms. The company may call you later about possibly being rehired, or you may decide to re-apply for a position. However, the key is that you will have the opportunity to decide whether you want to go back.

#### **An employer perspective**

The employer perspective is a little more complicated. First of all, you may have a policy about rehiring employees. If you do, of course you want to follow the policy. Usually a company does not have a hard rule that prohibits rehiring, although they may have a certain procedure and approval process to do it.

The employer has more leverage and options when looking for candidates to fill a position. However, looking at rehiring an old employee should be one of those options. You know what you are getting in terms of employee performance, and the old employee does not normally have nearly as much start-up time since he/she knows a lot about the company culture and the work environment. He/she probably also has pre-existing relationships that he/she can build upon.

Since the employer knows about the work performance of prior employees, he/she can also discretely screen people who are not a fit. If an employer considered all ex-employees, they probably would initially filter out about two-thirds of all the candidates.



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These are people that did not leave on good terms, did not have a good attitude or did not have a high enough level of performance. Many times, an employer will prefer to take a chance with an unknown new employee rather than rehire a known ex-employee.

There are some other common sense areas to consider from an employer perspective.

**Consider relationships with the rest of the team.** It doesn't make sense to rehire someone who other team members did not get along with. If you consider a rehire, make sure you talk to the rest of the team, as well as your clients. It's a good sign if everyone is excited to have the person come back. If people grumble or are resistant, then it usually doesn't make sense. You don't want to solve one problem and cause other problems at the same time. It is also not fair for the person being rehired to come back in an area where he/she is going to have instant problems.

**Be aware of potential resentment from current employees.** When you talk to the team about the ex-employee, also consider whether there will be resentment based on the new position. For instance, if a person leaves and then is rehired six months later with a promotion, other team members may be resentful. (Similarly, if you rehire a former employee as a consultant, you could be in trouble with current staff.)

**Follow all internal procedures and legal guidelines.** As was mentioned earlier, if your company has a policy on rehires, follow it to the letter. If you do not have a policy, always follow normal hiring policies. For instance, if an ex-employee applies for a position, don't tell him/her that he/she does not have a chance. Just evaluate him/her as you would other candidates. Having an ex-employee apply for a position does not obligate you to hire them. On the other hand, if you are pursuing an ex-employee, make sure you still follow normal hiring procedures. You don't want to hire an ex-employee while ignoring internal candidates, for instance. Again, the ex-employee may be the best candidate, but make sure you evaluate other candidates according to your hiring procedures.

**Allow some employment gap to occur.** Many companies have a policy of not rehiring an ex-employee for six months to a year. This is probably reasonable. If an employee leaves, you don't necessarily want to re-hire him/her one month later. Let some time pass to make sure that both sides are comfortable with a rehire situation and are not responding to some kind of short-term pressure.

### Summary

There are a number of things to consider in a rehire situation. From an employee perspective, you should leave a company in a manner that does not burn any bridges so that you can be considered for rehiring if you choose. If a former company will not consider you for rehire based on performance or how you left, then you have no opportunity to make a decision. If you choose to apply for a position at an ex-employer, or if they call you, at least you are in a position to make a decision based on the facts available.

Companies should also consider ex-employees for open positions, and not be afraid to recruit them. Ex-employees are a known entity and have much less of a company



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learning curve. Employers have the advantage of being able to only go after the small percentage of ex-employees they are really interested in, as long as they make sure that the ex-employee is hired without causing other problems internally. If the right circumstances are in place, the situation can be good for the employer and the employee.