It's over when it's over: Resign like you might be back someday

Written by Julie Desmond
Thursday, 24 June 2010 13:45

The resignation announcement on my desk was a sickening surprise: it was from someone I had never worked with, who wished to share his forced resignation with the world, and I feel strangely sorry for him. Raging about his change in circumstances, this person has let his anger overshadow his accomplishments. Whether leaving is your idea or someone else's, please leave with your pride intact and your professional progress in people's minds; you might be driving fast forward but, for most people, the future looms large in the rearview mirror.

If I wanted to hire or recommend this person to a future position, this letter created a roadblock. It said, "I resigned peacefully," and, "Unfortunately, (former employer) has decided to assassinate my professional character." Not so peacefully, then. Star employees address conflicts objectively and recognize that no assassination is peaceful. A potential employer would question his ability to read people and situations accurately.

The writer attached his resignation letter, which included a laundry list of slights, slammed the former employer and included threats of lawsuits. Why is he sharing this information indiscriminately? How can anyone hire or recommend a tattletale?

His letter reveals more than he might realize, saying, "While I made some errors in judgment over the past few weeks, they did not rise to the level that was indicated… not just my opinion, but also the opinion of several attorneys and agencies… who, unlike executive management, were able to make an unbiased decision… abused by your company… taking measures to remedy the situation." Maybe it's PTSD from raising children, but the whine in his voice hurts my ears, and I'm sitting in another state, unattached, just reading the thing.

Like most potential employers, not knowing the guy, I have only this letter to go by when assessing this person's character and abilities. He may be talented and wise, but his "errors in judgment" extend beyond any reasonable level. By sending this letter to his entire network and theirs, this individual comes across like a firecracker on the Fourth of July: explosive, far-reaching and aimless about where he lands.

If this is someone you want in the desk next to yours, on the assembly line near you or as your next trainee, let me know. He is probably available to start soon.

Julie Desmond leads job search and career planning workshops in Minneapolis. Write to Julie @insightnews.com.