

# Six things to do if they take the job offer back!

**Source: CareerBuilder.com**

Marleen Graham has been offered two different jobs in the past few months -- but both offers were retracted.

The first time, she worked for a small consulting firm and the contract for the account she worked was cut short. A couple of days later, the account requested to bring her back on board. After filling out some paperwork, she waited -- and waited, and waited -- to start work again. Two months later, she figured out that the account imposed a hiring freeze.

The second time, she was told verbally that a bank wanted to hire her and that it was a "done deal." She waited two weeks for an offer letter. Finally, Graham received an e-mail stating that the job was placed on hold indefinitely.

"The first time I was very disappointed because I really wanted to return to my contract assignment. The second time I was in disbelief because the vice president told me it was a done deal," Graham says.

"I wish that I continued searching for a job while I was waiting for my offer in writing and for the paperwork to be approved. I should have kept my search going so that I could have a fallback plan."

## **Fired before you're hired**

Graham, like many other job seekers, fell victim to a trend that's becoming more common as the economy continues to stagnate. While companies downsize and institute hiring freezes, job seekers are finding start dates pushed back and job offers withdrawn completely.

"Job offers are rescinded for a variety of reasons. Some [are] external, such as the overall economy, some [are] internal such as a department's funding is cut," says Laura George, author of "Excuse Me, Your Job is Waiting." "There are also times when it's determined that a person is needed but it would be more cost-effective to hire one person to work in two or more departments and spread the costs."

No matter the reason your job offer is repealed, experts agree that you should respond to the situation in a professional manner and get to the bottom of what happened.

"If your offer has been rescinded, you must find out what the exact reasons behind the decision were. Were they economically based or due to a background, drug or reference check?" says Jonathan Mazzocchi, partner and general manager of the New York accounting and finance division of Winter, Wyman. "As hard as it is, gather the facts. Try to separate the people you interviewed with from the organization's decision, and keep all of your interactions professional."

In Graham's case, for example, when the first offer was revoked, the company never explained what was going on; they just said the paperwork was in and they were waiting. In the meantime, she lived off her savings and put her job search on hold. The second company, which told her the job was placed on hold "indefinitely," said they would keep her mind for the future, but she hasn't heard anything yet.

"Once I found out that my offer was no longer viable, I quickly started to search for another position, but it was more difficult to find something by that time," she says.

## **Now what?**

Unfortunately, you don't have many legal rights in this situation. Most states have employment-at-will policies, which means employees can be terminated at any time, for any reason. You should think long and hard before

pursuing legal action if a job offer is revoked -- litigation costs will be extensive and you will undoubtedly burn bridges with your would-be employer. Consult an HR expert or lawyer in your area about your options.

It's important to handle the situation professionally if you find yourself with a rescinded job offer. Here are six steps you can take to protect yourself:

### **1. Find out why**

Find out the exact reason behind the withdrawn offer. Ask the potential employer if it was something revealed in a reference check or if it had something to do with the economy.

"Let the hiring manager know you are interested in working at the company if there are a change of circumstances," George says. "If you really are the best candidate, the hiring manager will contact you when the circumstances change."

### **2. Be open and honest**

"Once you've got a company that wants to hire you, you've cleared the tallest hurdle. How you react [to a rescinded job offer] can determine if that offer might return," says Jim Luzar, president of Sales Consultants of Brookfield, a recruiting firm. "Be open and honest with [the employer] about your situation. If you are still interested in the job, let them know your finances. Can you wait six months to start?"

Or, if you can find a way to earn some money in the interim, let the employer know you will wait for the full-time position.

"If you simply can't wait for the position to re-open, don't be shy about it," Luzar says. "You came looking for a job because you needed one. Respectively tell them so that if you are looking for a job again in the future, they will still have a high opinion of you."

### **3. Prepare yourself**

"In this economy, expect anything," says Carolyn Dougherty, executive search consultant. Do not stop looking for work until your first day at a new job. Graham says the biggest lesson she learned was that nothing is a done deal until you are sitting in your new office or cubicle.

### **4. Do your homework**

Before accepting a job offer, it's important to evaluate what's been offered. Ask about the employer's financial health and find out if the position is approved, Dougherty suggests. Ask if the company has ever withdrawn an offer and if so, what the company has done in the past. If the withdrawal of a vacant position is a real threat, ask if your offer letter can state what the company will do if the job offer is withdrawn.

### **5. Negotiate**

If you left an old job to work for a new company and your offer was retracted due to the economy, you can try to negotiate unemployment benefits or a severance package from the employer, Mazzocchi says. Or, if you really want this job, you can try negotiating for a lower salary or position. "Some companies may opt to help you out as the right thing to do," he says.

### **6. Move on**

If nothing comes from negotiating with your would-be employer, it's time to move on. Contact companies who have expressed interest in the past and let them know you are still available, suggests Roberta Chinsky Matuson, president of Human Resource Solutions. Whatever you do, resist the temptation to badmouth the organization that pulled back your offer.

In the meantime, Graham keeps busy by continuing her job search, going to school to maintain and enhance her skills, volunteering with nonprofit organizations and growing her own business.

"It is important to maintain your positivity in spite of the circumstances. Know that something viable will eventually come your way if you don't give up."