

# CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

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## All Good Things

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By Douglas E. Welch

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While you often spend a lot of time focused on getting a new job or landing that next client, all good things must come to an end at some point. It is important to remember that how you leave a job is just as important as how you start one. If you have problems at the end of a relationship, it can damage your reputation and your entire high-tech career.

### A Client Grows Up

As I write, I am in the midst of departing from a major client. We have worked together, on and off, for almost 10 years. For the last two years, I have been operating as a part-time internal IT person as the company has grown larger. I have been working on-site two days a week, while also on-call via phone or e-mail on my off days. It has been a very lucrative and rewarding relationship, but the time has come for the company to handle more of its internal IT.

When I did my “end-of year” review for this client in December, I made it clear that to best serve the company and its clients, it needed someone in-house to handle the day-to-day IT troubles that accompany any company, large or small. It has taken these last six months to put the plan in action, but I think the company will be better for it, even if it means fewer hours for me.

### Cleaning Up

Over the next several weeks, I will be dedicating a lot of time to preparing the way for the new in-house IT tech. I am documenting procedures, cleaning up files, gathering software and anything else I can think of to allow this new person to get down to work immediately. My guide in all this work is to treat this person as I would like to be treated in the same situation. I have been involved in several job changes where this has certainly not been the case. I have faced missing software and hardware, no documented procedures, and even outright sabotage. Thankfully, the good has outweighed the bad, but problems do occur.

Make sure the new person has all the passwords, addresses, keys, etc. that he needs on the first day. Work with your client to ensure that she has a computer and a desk ready for her when she arrives. Nothing says “welcome” more than a place to hang your hat and put down your bags on your first day on a new job.

The more comfortable the new person is in the environment, the easier the transition will be. In some cases, the new arrival will want access to you for a few days after he starts. Others may want to fly solo as soon as possible. Be sensitive to this. Listen closely and plan your exit accordingly.

### Good for You/Good for Them

The advantages of leaving a job or a client on a good note should be obvious. I will still be available to this client for work when the company needs an extra hand or some specialized services I can provide. It also leaves open the possibility of the client recommending you to some other person or company. Long relationships, when they are good, often lead to other long relationships.

There is also the slight chance that perhaps the new person will not work out. I would never wish this upon a company, but it does happen. You want to leave the door open for your return should something like this occur. In my case, I didn’t really want the full-time position at the company, but life changes and your job needs might change down the road. This position might be just what you need in a few months.

While it may be a little stressful for you, leaving a client can be an excellent opportunity to show exactly what you stand for, personally and professionally. You may get to make only one first impression, but the impression you make when you leave is sure to be even more long lasting. It says a lot about who you are and bears greatly on the opportunities this client may bring to you in the future. No matter what your relationship with the client, good or bad, there is no reason to burn bridges. Leaving on a good note can turn one ending into a new beginning. □

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