

Looking to be laid off? Don't be too hasty  
'Problem' employees seeking an easy way out need to assess other options

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For most, layoffs are nasty, traumatizing events best avoided -- but to a small handful of people, it's a light at the end of the tunnel.

Rather than quit or get fired, a small minority are keen on receiving a healthy severance package, as well as employment insurance. "I guess there's people who want to have their cake and eat it too," says Michele Waters, a Victoria, B.C. career coach ([www.careerquestcoaching.com](http://www.careerquestcoaching.com)).

She doesn't advocate this strategy -- there are better ways to leave a job than digging in your heels and becoming a problem employee.

"I think it's such wasted energy," says Waters. It also reflects poorly on your character. "It lacks courage -- why not quit and suck it up, and move on?"

Financially, it's not as glorious as it may seem. The money you earn from employment insurance and a severance package won't be enough to live on for very long. "And wouldn't you rather be working than collecting money from the government?" Waters asked.

If you're partially motivated by revenge, the strategy can backfire. "Always be aware that the employer might be planning to upstage you." While you're hatching plans, your boss may be already planning to get rid of you.

Instead, Waters urges people to consider other options. First of all, assess your motivation for being laid off, and what you hope to gain -- then make a plan.

If you're hoping to get laid off because of legitimate health issues that are causing problems, consider a medical leave, instead. This may also lead to a health-related layoff.

If the job is proving to be a poor fit, consider what's bothering you.

Sometimes small changes to your job description or work schedule can make all the difference. "Could it be cut down to parttime to make it more tolerable?"

If you must leave, it's always better for your career to line up another position, rather than being laid off. But if you're gung-ho on the layoff strategy, it's best to approach your boss directly.

"I think so much more can be accomplished by being honest and forthright -- then the other person can come to the table and respond accordingly."

Provided that the circumstances are correct, and your workplace is financially in a situation where they need to pare down their staff, volunteering for a package may work well for you, your employer, and those who want to stay.

If this does go your way, don't forget to negotiate other things too, like the reference they'll provide for you, and how your record of employment will read. If you're hoping for Employment Insurance, your employer must indicate on this government document that you were laid off, and didn't quit or get fired.

And after you've left, it's important to reflect on what didn't work, and what you learned, in an effort not to repeat a negative pattern. "What do you want to leave behind, and what experiences do you want to hold on to?"

Assess whether you have a history of responding like this after a length of time. You may find that perhaps the type of work isn't right for you, or even the work term. If you need a lot of variety, maybe you're better suited to contracts or temporary assignments, in which the employer won't be misled into thinking you're there for the long haul.

Make sure you know where you're headed.

"Where are you thinking that the grass might be greener than where it is now? Or are you blindly going out there and trying to figure it out on the fly?"

Whatever your decision, don't let it be a "knee-jerk reaction" to unhappy circumstances at work. "Take time to think everything through before taking action," Waters advises.

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