

6 signs you should rethink that job offer

Getting a job offer can come with a sense of excitement, relief and accomplishment. It can be a great moment – unless you're not sure you want the job.

If you're having doubts about a job offer, things can seem complicated. You might even feel pressured to say yes.

But being offered a job doesn't mean you have to accept it, even if the job market feels uncertain at the moment.

"COVID-19 has caused uncertainty for many job seekers and while you may be concerned about your job options, it's still important to consider whether a position is the right fit for you at the moment," says SEEK's Resident Psychologist Sabina Read.

Here Read and career and interview coach [Leah Lambart](#) share when and how you should consider turning down a job offer.

When to think about turning down a job offer

1. The work environment doesn't suit you

"Your work environment is incredibly important when it comes to how satisfied you are," Lambart says. "The ideal work environment varies for different people, so you need to understand your own personality type and the work environments you thrive in."

If there's a difference between your preferences (e.g. you like to be creative and innovative) and the environment of the new position (e.g. the role is very process driven), it may not be the right fit.

2. You feel flattered by the offer

"It's very flattering to be offered a role, but it can mean you become blinkered to the realities of the job," Read says. "It's natural to want to do the 'right thing' and accept an offer, but it's okay to recognise that while it's a compliment, not every role will be the best fit for you right now."

Feeling flattered isn't a sign you should turn the job down on its own – but if flattery is the only thing the job offer has going for it, it could be worth reconsidering.

3. The job or workplace doesn't align with your priorities

[Finding work that reflects your values](#) is key to finding satisfaction in your job.

“Your values and priorities may shift over the years, but reflect on what’s really important to you,” Read says. “You might value workplace learning opportunities, a short commute, flexible working conditions, the opportunity to move up in the business or money factors.”

There are lots of elements that help us feel satisfied at work, and if you can identify them before you accept a role, you’re much more likely to find a workplace that reflects what’s important to you. It may not be possible to achieve them all, but if your values and priorities are totally out of alignment with the job offer, it’s probably worth reconsidering.

4. You don’t get a good vibe from the hiring manager or team

“If you don’t get a good feeling from the hiring manager or the team you’ll be working with, then it’s more than likely that feeling won’t go away,” says Lambart.

“If you work full time, you’re going to be spending at least 40 hours a week at work and it won’t be enjoyable if you don’t like who you’re working with.”

It could be worth doing some research into the workplace or reading company reviews to help you here.

5. The role won’t help you reach your goals

While not everyone aspires to hit particular career goals, some people have a clear vision of what they want to achieve. “If you’re someone with certain career goals, then you need to evaluate potential job offers to see if the position is the right step for you now,” Lambart says.

If a role won’t allow you to achieve your goals or build the skills and experience you need to reach your target, then it might be worth walking away from the offer.

Of course, many of us have had to press pause on certain goals due to the impact of COVID-19, but it’s still worth looking at whether a role could work as a step towards your goal in the long term or not.

6. The job isn’t aligned to your natural strengths

According to Lambart, there is an increasing body of research that suggests people who use their strengths in their role are likely to experience greater job satisfaction, higher productivity, higher engagement and greater wellbeing.

“When we use our strengths, work generally feels easier and more enjoyable,” she says. “On the flip side, in a role where we can’t use our strengths we may procrastinate, feel bored and lose confidence.”

Weighing up what matters to you

When making any decision about a job, it's worth looking at how the job suits you, and what you need from it – whether that's work to pay the bills, a way to take the next step in your career or something else.

If you're facing a job offer you don't feel great about, think about the six points outlined above. One of these alone may not feel like it's enough for you to turn a role down, or it might.

Perhaps you're willing to make a compromise on one aspect for now. But if a few of these reasons resonate, or you're only considering taking the job because you feel you have to, it may be worth rethinking the offer and searching for another.

While it may be hard to find a role that ticks all the boxes, you deserve one that at least suits you and your lifestyle and offers a safe and suitable environment to work in.

How to turn down a job without burning any bridges

Saying no to a job offer isn't always easy, especially if you're not sure when the next opportunity will be.

But it's a situation many people face at some point. A recent social media poll by SEEK showed that around 2 in 3 Kiwis say they have turned down a job offer at least once in their lives.

There are ways to turn down a job offer in a professional manner – starting with your timing.

"If you have considered the offer but have decided you don't want to accept, let your contact know as soon as possible," Lambart says. "Leading them on and wasting their time will only burn bridges."

And while the role may not be the best fit for you right now, the potential employer can become part of your network and you never know when your paths may cross again.

"Thank them for the opportunity, say you've carefully considered it but you've decided not to accept the role," Read advises. "Then I would say something about how you'll be following the company's growth or trajectory with interest."

If you're declining the job offer via email, [this template can help you](#) craft a polite response.

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