

Taking a Gap Year

I chatted with a transitioning service member a couple of weeks ago. He was concerned because he had received a conditional offer of employment. The issue was that it could take up to a year for the employer to process the needed security clearance. First, let me explain a conditional offer of employment. The company wants to hire you. There are legal things that have to be completed before the offer becomes final. These could be a drug analysis, a financial background check or a security clearance.

The curious thing about this gent was that he had a current high-level clearance while on active duty and the new job was in line with his duties in the military. But - the employer must follow consistently the hiring process to stay on the right side of the HR legal concerns. So, the dilemma.

His concern was what to do in the interim. A very logical question. I suggested that he have a frank discussion with the prospective employer. Was there a middle ground that could be pursued? Was there an interim job that didn't require the clearance that he could fill until the process was completed? This would be an advantage to the employer since they might lose this best qualified candidate for the job.

If not, then it's up to the candidate to determine next steps. These could involve continuing to look for another opportunity. An interim employment in a flexible job such as Home Depot might be an option. Another would be volunteering at a nonprofit or simply taking a "gap" year. The gap year could involve relocation, hobbies, travel – whatever. Whatever the decision, it is important to ensure that any certifications or job currency requirements are met. You must stay competitive in your field of expertise.

The final decisions are those of the service member. How does he or she proceed is determined best by him or her. In our discussion in the situation, we reviewed the various options. My final suggestion was for him to speak to the employer. Include him on the discussion as he may have options of his own. Make the best of a very difficult time.



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