



## Dear Stepping Stone: Describing Why You Left a Job

by John West Hadley

**Q**uestion: How should I handle a question as to why I would consider leaving an employer that I have been with for a relatively short time? I have been employed with my current employer for seven months, the previous employer was for eight years.

Advice:

You need to keep your answer short and simple ... the longer the answer, the more apologetic it will sound, and the more you will be emphasizing the past instead of the future. Think very carefully about why you left, and how you can express that in a way that doesn't criticize your employer. Then give a short (one or two sentence) explanation.

Finish with something that is forward looking, ideally what you are seeking now. However, if you are leaving for any reason related in any way to your performance, then be sure to include a statement about what you've learned from that. Don't leave the listener wondering why that won't be a problem in the future!

Here's an example:

"I was hired by XYZ to be the financial actuary for their individual insurance products. Shortly after I joined them, there was a restructuring, and the scope of my financial responsibilities no longer fit my long term goals. What I'm looking for now is ..."

Your message will be strongest if the "looking for now" expresses a result you expect to be able to bring to that role, or a challenge you can help your target employer overcome. For help in doing this, see "Catch Yourself Doing a Good Job" in the April 2006 issue of *The Stepping Stone*, or e-mail [SteppingStone@JHACareers.com](mailto:SteppingStone@JHACareers.com) for other resources.

Submit your questions and challenges, and your own comments on any of the articles we publish to [SteppingStone@JHACareers.com](mailto:SteppingStone@JHACareers.com). We will give you expert advice in subsequent issues. □



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