

# Salary Negotiation

*Negotiating a job offer can be daunting. What do you say? How do you say it? How do you express your enthusiasm for a position, yet set firm boundaries concerning the salary and the benefits you desire?*



If an offer - good or bad - is extended to you, always tell the interviewer you would like time to think it over. Since accepting a new job is a major decision, consider all the aspects involved such as: Is it the right career move? How interesting and challenging is the work? How will you develop and grow within the position and the organization? Do the organization's values fit with your own? Are there opportunities for advancement? If the opportunity is one you really like, but the salary is not what you had hoped for, can you negotiate? Before you make a final decision, carefully consider answers to these and other questions

## ***Weighing Offers***

If you receive a salary offer that is acceptable and in your best interest, your next step is to ask about the rest of the compensation package. You need to have complete information to make an informed decision. You should receive information about the salary and benefits package including health insurance, pension plan options, and holiday, vacation and sick day policies. Also consider:

- ◆ The reporting structure of the organization
- ◆ Specific duties and responsibilities
- ◆ Advancement opportunities
- ◆ Organizational culture
- ◆ How often and by whom are performance evaluations or reviews conducted
- ◆ Reputation of the organization and its products and/or services
- ◆ Turnover rate of the organization
- ◆ Immediate and long-term plans and goals of the organization
- ◆ Training and management development programs
- ◆ Employer's ranking in the industry
- ◆ Starting salary, bonuses, profit sharing, and benefits
- ◆ Travel requirements
- ◆ Your "fit" in the job and in the organization
- ◆ Availability of suitable, affordable housing in the local area

- ◆ Recreation and entertainment facilities in the area
- ◆ Average cost of living index
- ◆ Social environment
- ◆ Proximity to family and friends

Avoid accepting a job offer on the spot unless you believe you are fully informed about the position. It is appropriate to ask for time to consider an offer. Let the interviewer know what day you will call back with your decision. Except for unusual circumstances, you should be able to reach a decision after a few days of careful consideration.

If you are scheduled for other interviews, inform the interviewer and try to give an accurate assessment of when you will make your decision. Most employers would see your request for time to decide about an offer in a positive light and respect your wish to make a careful choice.

## ***Negotiating***

The only time to negotiate is after you have been offered the job. You are not in a position to negotiate salary or any other attachments until you have a firm offer. If you are officially offered a job, the first thing you need to decide is whether or not the offer is acceptable to you in its present form. If this is the best you can negotiate, would you still accept the offer? If you feel the offer is unacceptable to you, you must determine what will make it acceptable.

Many companies have a fairly tight salary range for entry level positions. To establish the acceptable range for the position, research the company and your field of work to find out what salary range you can expect. In discussing the salary with a potential employer, bring up the average salary range for professionals in your field based upon your research. A range is often more comfortable to discuss because it allows you and the employer more flexibility. Researching the salary range for a job before you interview will improve your chances of gaining a good offer. You can consult salary survey web sites for ranges by industry and geographic location. Career Center professionals also can help you research and determine appropriate salary ranges for various occupations.

**There are many factors to consider when weighing offers.**

## SALARY NEGOTIATION

Follow the steps below when negotiating job offers:

1. Call the recruiter, and ask if it is a convenient time to discuss the details of the offer.
2. Mention you are excited about the offer and want to join the organization.
3. Begin with one or two points in the offer you really like.
4. Present your concerns briefly and try to gauge the recruiter's reaction before going into more detail.
5. Elaborate upon the major points you have determined would make the offer more attractive to you.
6. Give the recruiter time to think about what you have said and agree on a time to talk again.
7. Reiterate your interest in the organization and thank the recruiter for his or her time.

## *Evaluating Offers*

When evaluating the initial offer do not evaluate the position against the perfect job offer; evaluate it against the next best alternative. While salary is certainly an important element of a job offer, it is not the only thing to consider. The value of an offer includes all of the benefits and other items provided to you as an employee. Therefore, try not to look exclusively at salary as the measure of acceptability.

Benefits include basic insurance coverage as well as many additional perks offering true tangible gains in relation to the competition. Here are some basic elements of benefit plans.

- ◆ Medical Insurance
- ◆ Dental Insurance
- ◆ Optical/Eye Insurance
- ◆ Life Insurance
- ◆ Accidental Death Insurance
- ◆ Business Travel Insurance
- ◆ Disability Insurance
- ◆ Vacation
- ◆ Holidays
- ◆ Sick/Personal Days
- ◆ 401(k) or 403(b) Plans
- ◆ Pension Plans
- ◆ Profit Sharing
- ◆ Stock Options/ESOPs
- ◆ Tuition Reimbursement
- ◆ Health Clubs
- ◆ Dependent Care, Maternity/  
Paternity Leaves
- ◆ Employee Assistance Programs
- ◆ Overtime/Compensatory Time
- ◆ Travel Premiums
- ◆ Parking Reimbursement
- ◆ Commuting Cost Reimbursement
- ◆ Expense Reimbursement
- ◆ Counseling Services
- ◆ Credit Unions with Low  
Interest Rate Car Loans
- ◆ Legal Services
- ◆ Computers for Home Use
- ◆ Flexible Hours
- ◆ Moving Expenses
- ◆ Training Programs
- ◆ Employee Discounts on  
Products or Services
- ◆ Low Interest Mortgages
- ◆ Sales Commissions and/  
or Awards



Refer to the Job Evaluation Worksheet in Chapter Seven to help you work through a comparison of benefit packages.

## *Handling Multiple Offers*

Unfortunately, job offers do not always come at the same time. If you have other job possibilities pending, you could contact those employers to see if they could arrange an interview or make a decision as soon as possible. You also may ask for more time to make a decision about a firm job offer. If no other interviews are forthcoming, you will need to decide to the best of your ability by weighing all the components of the offer.

Before you accept a position, make sure you have worked out a realistic budget allowing you to live on the salary offered. Depending on the geographic location, the real value of your salary will vary. The following web sites can help you with this type of question.

- ◆ [www.jobweb.com/salaryinfo/default.htm](http://www.jobweb.com/salaryinfo/default.htm)
- ◆ [www.costofliving.com](http://www.costofliving.com)
- ◆ [www.bestplaces.net](http://www.bestplaces.net)
- ◆ [www.salary.com](http://www.salary.com)
- ◆ [www.jobstar.org](http://www.jobstar.org)

Making a decision about your first job after graduation will be an exciting and anxiety-producing process. When you take the time to evaluate your alternatives and consider what is important to you, chances are good you will make the right decision.

**Investigate salary ranges before negotiating an offer.**