

# JOB OFFERS

**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 REGARDING THE SALARY AND THE BENEFITS YOU DESIRE?**



When an offer is extended to you, it is appropriate to tell the interviewer you would like time to think it over. Because accepting a new job is a major decision, you must first 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? Are the organization's values compatible 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, 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
- Your "fit" with the job and organization
- How often (and by whom) performance evaluations are 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
- 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 date 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 will view your request for additional 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 conditions 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.

Most companies have a fairly tight salary range for entry level positions. To establish the acceptable range for the position, review salary surveys to determine the average salary offered to graduates with your major and degree level in the industry. When discussing the salary with a potential employer, bring up the average salary range for professionals in your field based on your research. A range is often more comfortable to discuss because it allows you and the employer more flexibility. You can consult salary survey websites for ranges by employer type, industry, and geographic location. Career Center consultants can also help you research and determine appropriate salary ranges for various occupations.

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 perks 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 Days
- 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 7 to help you work through a comparison of benefit packages (located on page 92).

## Handling Multiple Offers

Unfortunately, job offers do not always come at the same time. If you have other interviews pending, you can contact those employers to see if they could arrange an interview or make a decision sooner. You may also ask for more time to make a decision about a firm job offer. It is reasonable to ask for several days to a week to consider the offer. Don't forget to express your appreciation for the offer and your eagerness to work for the organization. When an employer is waiting for your decision, you must follow through on your promise to communicate your decision by the agreed upon deadline.

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 websites can help you evaluate a salary offer:

- [www.jobweb.com/salaryinfo/default.htm](http://www.jobweb.com/salaryinfo/default.htm)
- [www.jobstar.org](http://www.jobstar.org)
- [www.payscale.com](http://www.payscale.com)
- [www.salary.com](http://www.salary.com)
- [www.salaryexpert.com](http://www.salaryexpert.com)
- [www.costofliving.com](http://www.costofliving.com)

After evaluating all components of a job offer, it is appropriate to accept the offer by telephone. Then, send a brief letter to accept the offer formally and confirm the terms and conditions of the position and compensation package (e.g., title, salary, benefits, start date, signing bonus, relocation package). Some employers send a written employment offer and request that a copy be signed and returned to them. Before signing and returning an offer, read the letter carefully to make sure the salary and specific details of the offer are correct.

If you decide to decline a job offer, it is acceptable to communicate your decision to the employer by telephone. Express your sincere appreciation for the job offer and let the employer know that your decision to decline their generous offer was especially difficult. State briefly your reason(s) for declining the offer (e.g., acceptance of another position better suited to your career goals). End your conversation on a positive note keeping the door open for future possibilities.

Once you have accepted a job offer, which means you have said yes to the offer either verbally or in writing, you are bound by ethical standards to withdraw from the recruiting process. Let all employers with whom you have recently interviewed know that you have accepted an offer and are no longer available. Contact the Career Center and have your WorkNet account deactivated so that your resume will not be referred to other employers. You should also cancel all pending interviews.

Accepting an employment offer means that you have made a commitment to an employer. Continuing to interview hoping something better will come along is especially unwise. Recruiters talk and share stories about job applicants who have acted unprofessionally during the interview process and/or renege on job offers. Additionally, an applicant's unethical behavior can also damage the University's reputation in the employer community.

Bowling Green State University students are expected to interview and accept job offers in good faith. If you renege on a job offer or continue to interview after accepting an offer, you will lose all recruiting privileges with the Career Center. Privileges can only be reinstated at the discretion of the Career Center Executive Director.

