

Negotiating Your Salary

Why Negotiate a Salary.

The confidence you exhibit during the negotiation process of the interview shows that you have researched and have a good understanding of your worth in the marketplace. Candidates should be ready to negotiate and most employers expect it. Eight out of ten times you're offered a job, you can ask the prospective employer for a sweeter deal. Saying yes to the first offer could be a very costly "yes". The negotiation process may feel uncomfortable at times and continue for a few days, but persistence and good salary information will give you the edge.

We are reluctant to negotiate for fear of killing our chance for the job or because we don't know how to negotiate. Agreeing to the first offer made may be the path to least resistant, but may also be the most expensive mistake you will make. Patience, persistence, preparation and research are the keys to a confident and a productive negotiation process.

Be Prepared and Do The Research

Prepare for the question by researching in advance probable salary ranges for similar jobs in similar organizations, regions, economic environment and what the market will bare. A list of salary resources for art and designers is available for you to research. In addition, complete an analysis of your own personal budget and what you will need to live and pay your bills. Combining these pieces of information will give you a salary range in which you can feel confident to negotiate.

Addressing the salary issue in the interview.

The salary question can pop up at various times during the job search process, even before they meet you. This is a strategy to screen you out. Be prepared to satisfy them without giving them specific amounts. The best position in which to negotiate from is one in which you know they want you, so it is important for you to delay the salary discussion until you have had a chance to sell your skills, attributes and the important value you can bring to the organization. The following are some statements to use to delay the discussion until you feel they are sold on your value:

" I applied for this position because I am very interested in the job and your company. I know I can make an immediate impact once on the job, but I'd like to table the salary discussion until we both agree that I'm the right person for the job". Now tell me about what will be expected in this position".

"My current compensation package is well with in the range for this position and location. I'm confident your offer will be competitive".

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“My salary requirements would depend on the total compensation package including benefits and the opportunity to earn performance-based incentives, I am confident that we can arrive at a mutually beneficial agreement during our interview”.

If you find that they are being persistent about what you are looking for in a salary, the following statement may satisfy the interviewer.

“My research indicates that a position such as the one described typically pays \$_____ to \$_____ I would be willing to consider a salary within that range, depending on the responsibilities and expectations of the position.”

Another strategy would be to turn the question on them. Try and get them to be the first to name a salary amount or range.

“Could you give me an idea of the range you’ve established for this position?”

Other sneaky ways the salary issue crops up are with questions like, “What is your current compensation”?

“In my last job, I was paid below the market price for my skills. I accepted this for a while because it gave me the opportunity to learn and develop. Now I am very clear about the value I can offer to an employer and I want my salary to be competitive.”

Salary History vs. Salary Requirement

Salary History is a list or summary of your previous salaries (yearly income) for each of your past jobs.

Salary Requirement is a request by a company asking you to name a salary.

Employers when posting a job ad will require that you include a salary history and/or salary requirement. Do not ignore these requests. Your application may be put aside because it will be considered incomplete and/or that you are unable to follow instructions. Salary requests are to be addressed in the cover letter. Below are samples of statements that can be used in the cover letter or application:

“In my last job, I was paid below the market for my skills, I accepted this for awhile because It gave me the opportunity to learn and develop. Now I’m very clear about the value I can offer to a design firm and I want my salary to be competitive.

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At my current internship my starting wage was \$8 per hour, but was raised to \$9.50 within 2 months due to my skill development."

"My current position is not a career position but great opportunity prove my reliability, time management and leadership skills which helped support my education. I was making minimum wage plus tips and I did very well and continued to work there for 2 years."

"Please know that the typical annual compensation requirement for someone with my skills ranges from 28K to 32K."

"Presently, I prefer to consider a salary in the range of the middle \$30's."

"My required salary would depend on the benefit package and opportunity to advance and take on more responsibilities, but I would consider a starting range of \$25,000 to \$35,000."

Stating your salary requirement in a range rather than a single figure is allowing you to negotiate the higher end of the range as they see your value during the interview. Once you have named a single figure, it is impossible to expect a higher offer. If name too low a figure you run the risk of getting hired at that salary and making this the most expensive 2 seconds of your life or they will look for other candidates who know they are worth more.

What to Negotiate

Base salary is only one part of a total compensation package that may be negotiated. So, don't say no to an offer until you have considered all the facts. A benefit package, which can include, vacation time, sick days, professional training, parking, medical benefits, life insurance, holiday pay commissions, relocation package etc., on average can equal a 30% of the total compensation package.

If you are not satisfied with the base salary but consider the position to be a great career step, ask about performance evaluations and how often raises and bonuses are distribute. For an example, is it an across the board 3% raise for everyone in the department once a year or are raises/bonuses based on performance and attaining your goals twice a year.

There are many things to consider, when negotiating a compensation package. You need a complete and accurate picture of the job offer before you consider accepting, renegotiating or turning down a job offer. Ask the interviewer who you should contact with questions or clarifications you might have regarding the benefit package.

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"I'm very delighted in your interest and thank you for your offer. I'm very excited about working for this company. This is an important decision for me and I would like some time to consider your offer. When do you need to have my answer?"

A Compensation Glossary (hotlink) and a Job Offer Checklist (hotlink) can assist you in negotiating and making informed decisions about the compensation package offered.

When An Offer Comes In Too Low

Don't say no, instead ask for time to consider the offer. Call within the allotted time and make counteroffer.

"I've given you're offer considerable thought and feel that I cannot take this job at the salary offered. Is there a way in which I could be paid more in the range of \$ _____? or negotiate an extra week vacation or a flex-schedule."

"I feel confident that in a short time you will see my value to this organization. Would you consider a performance evaluation in 30 days at which time we could negotiate the difference in your salary offer and my requirements?"

Accepting or Turning Down the Offer.

Once you have agreed on the compensation package (salary and benefits), it is good business practice to have the employer's offer and your acceptance in writing. Ask about your starting date, appropriate attire and whom you should first report to and training schedule.

If another employer that you have been courting suddenly comes through with an offer, it is detrimental to your character and credibility to accept the second offer.

When the gap between the employer's offer and your stated range is too wide, or benefits did not fit your expectation to close with negotiation, or the job is not what you had expected, try to not show your disappointment. Use the following strategy:

1. Be prepared to accept the risk of losing the job offer
2. Communicate the specifics of the job offer that are not acceptable. The vacation, insurance, money, the job responsibilities
3. Counteroffer or offer solutions that would solve the impasse.

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The statements below will keep you in good standing for future opportunities if the counteroffer is rejected. You must be willing to lose this job forever. This is not a strategy to use to get a higher wage.

"I'm very interested in becoming a part of this company, however I cannot accept your offer (state your reason in specifics addressing parts of the offer that are not what you expected). IF you could (give your counteroffer or solution) I would accept the position immediately."

"I'm flattered by your job offer, but feel that it would not be fair of me to accept. The salary is lower than I would like it and that is the reason I can't accept it. Perhaps you, could reconsider your offer or keep me in mind for future openings that might allow me to be worth more to your team."

Summary:

- Question about salary too early in the hiring process are designed to screen you out.
- Let the employer be the first to bring up the topic of salary and try to get them to name a figure first.
- It is not to your advantage to discuss the compensation package too early during the interview, until you know they want you.
- Address it if asked and use techniques that will satisfy the employer until you are satisfied they see your value to the company
- Be prepared by researching and computing a salary range before the first interview.
- State your salary requirement in a range within the probable salary range of the employer and end a bit above what you expect to settle for.
- Do not turn down an offer until you understand the total compensation package.
- Ask the employer for time to consider the offer and prepare for your counteroffer.

Resources:

Websites:

Negotiation techniques for college students

<http://www.collegerecruiter.com/pages/articles/article257.htm> (hotlink)

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List of salary negotiation articles

http://www.quintcareers.com/salary_negotiation_articles.html (hotlink)

Salary.com (hotlink)

<http://www.salary.com/>

Comparative Salary links (hotlink)

<http://tools.monster.com/archives/salarytools/>

Salary Survey for Interior Designers, Industrial Designers, Graphic and Interactive Designers (hotlink)

http://www.coroflot.com/community/salary_survey.asp

U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics by State(hotlink)

<http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oessrcst.htm>