



Negotiating salary during an initial job offer

What are your talents worth to your next employer? Follow these tips and you'll have an answer that will get you the salary you deserve.

"Show me the money" is one of the most difficult subjects for a prospective employee to broach with one's future boss. Ask for too much and your ego can come across as self-inflated and arrogant. Ask for too little and an unscrupulous employer could take advantage of your naiveté and get your time and talents for far less than market value.

As savvy job-seekers know, it literally pays to do your homework prior to the initial interview with a new company. This includes an understanding of what constitutes a compensation package that is comparable to similar jobs in the same region.

There are several ways to uncover this information. The easiest, of course, is to look at the ad or job specs that brought you to this juncture in the first place. The salary will either be listed as a flat hourly rate or as a low-to-high range which is based on the candidate's education and level of experience.

The second thing is to query a friend or associate who is performing the same kind of duties. As a cautionary note, many companies frown upon staff members discussing salary and perks, even amongst themselves. If you have concerns about jeopardizing an insider's job security by asking for information they're not at liberty to divulge to you, the alternative is to ask someone who works for one of their competitors.

Your third choice is to glean salary information from websites on the Internet. A Google search will yield even more options that will allow you to have a better sense of what your skill levels are worth to a hiring agency. In addition, you can research salary data through professional organizations in your area of expertise.

Never bring up the question of money early in the negotiations. In fact, it is to your advantage to delay it as long as possible and to allow your future employer to be the one who brings it up. This delaying tactic serves two valuable purposes. The first is to give you a chance to ask as many questions and to learn as much as possible about what this particular position will entail in terms of responsibilities, hours, travel, continuing education, etc. The second is to allow you to shine in terms of discussing the accomplishments, background and vision that will make you a valued new member of the team.

At some point the employer is probably going to ask you what your expectations are in terms of salary. The safest answer is that you would expect to be paid a wage that is competitive with the current market. If you are feeling confident about the numbers you have crunched prior to this meeting, it's also acceptable to put forth a generic range for the employer to consider. You might



also be asked what you are presently making. In the zeal to secure a raise, candidates will sometimes name a much higher figure and expect the interviewer to top it. This is a big mistake. Such data is too easy to check up on, not to mention that even a small lie will cast aspersions on everything you have presented about your qualifications. In addition, you could price yourself right out of the running if the employer's idea of a fair offer is only a dollar or two more than your current boss is paying.

Money isn't everything, of course. Let's say that the interviewer offers you an annual salary that is less than the amount you were banking on. If it's ridiculously unreasonable, you have no reason to try to argue about it. If, however, this is a company that you could grow a career with, plus position yourself for bigger opportunities and connections, you're in a good spot to negotiate.

Are there concessions the employer would be willing to make in order to attract you?. Would the lower salary be more appealing if you knew that two days out of each week you could be working at home in your bathrobe? If it's a smaller company, you'll often find greater flexibility in terms of working titles, responsibilities and evaluation periods. There's never any harm in asking, especially if you sense that the employer is enthusiastic about your credentials and wants to create a win-win situation for both of you.