
NEGOTIATION

HOW YOU RECEIVE A JOB OFFER can have a lasting impact on your salary and lifetime earnings. Handling the incoming offer, coordinating the timing of offers, and negotiating for salary or other benefits are important components of a successful search process. The advisors in the Career Center are available to answer questions and work with you during negotiations. Vault.com, Glassdoor.com and many of the books on interviewing in the Career Center library also provide negotiation information.

When you receive the offer

When you receive a job offer, **don't be pressured into giving an answer on the spot**. If you receive a job offer by email or telephone message, be sure to **respond immediately and professionally, even if you are not yet sure whether you will accept the offer**. It is perfectly appropriate to ask for time to consider the offer, so your response should do the following:

- Thank the employer for the offer.
- Reiterate your interest in the position.
- Mention that you would like a little time to consider the offer (reasons you might give include wanting to talk the offer over with your family and/or partner, or that you have a few other options you are considering).
- Establish a date by which you will follow up. If you know you need a specific amount of time (for example, if another employer has said they will let you know within a week), you can ask for that amount of time. If you just want a little time to think about the offer, you could ask the employer when they need an answer.
- If the issue of salary did not come up during the final interview, this would also be an appropriate time to ask about the salary and benefits for the position, and to begin salary negotiations. If you are not prepared to negotiate salary, you could wait to ask about salary until you follow-up.

Gathering Information

If you are considering other options, and have received an offer that needs a response, let these employers know that you have received an offer, but are still very interested in their positions. Ask if there is any information they can give you, either about where you stand, or when they are likely to have a decision. They should at least be able to provide an updated timeline that will help you in negotiating your current offer, and in some cases they may be willing to extend an offer, or let you know that you have not been selected.

Responding to the Offer

If you are not ready to decide by the date you agreed on with the employer, you should still follow up with the employer on or before the agreed upon date. Let the employer know that you need more time, and give a reason for needing the extension. You should also be prepared with your best possible response in case the employer will not give you extra time at this point.

Timing the Salary Discussion

Make sure that you do not make a firm commitment to accept an offer until after you have negotiated salary and any other employment terms that are important to you. It is generally to your advantage to delay salary negotiations until late in the process, as discussing salary early may limit your ability to negotiate (if you try to negotiate too early, you may be eliminated in favor of a candidate who is willing to accept the figure given, but if you accept the figure given, it will be difficult to ask for more later). You will have far less, if any, negotiating power after you have made a commitment to accept a position. Do your homework on salary early in case you can't avoid the conversation, but if an employer raises the question before the final interview, you might try to delay the salary discussion with a response such as, "I'm very excited about this position, and would really like to establish whether this could be the best fit for both of us before we focus on a salary figure. Would it be possible to hold off on that discussion for a bit?"

Know that Negotiation has Limits

Sometimes an organization will post salary information along with a job description. This information could be a salary range, midpoint or average salary, or a minimum salary for the position. Most positions do have an established range, so it is worth discussing the salary even if a single number was posted. However, be aware that the economy, the level of demand for the job you are seeking, organizational policies about pay rates, and the salaries of others in similar positions can all have an effect on the extent to which you will be able to negotiate.

Do Your Homework

Your negotiations will be most successful if you are well-prepared. Use salary calculators to get a sense of the typical salary range for the position, type of organization, and location that you are considering. Glassdoor.com, payscale.com, and salary.com are a few resources you can check. You can also use job search sites to look for similar jobs; other job descriptions may list a salary range even if your description didn't include one.

If you have access to inside information, now's the time to use it. Did any of your friends take similar jobs? Do your friends or family know anyone in this organization, or a similar one?

The Negotiation

First, ensure that you are negotiating with the hiring manager; a recruiter or human resources representative may not have as much flexibility. It is to your advantage to get the manager to give the first figures, so ask what salary (or salary range) the manager has in mind before he or she can ask you what salary you want. If the manager asks first, you might respond with something like, "I'm willing to negotiate. What did you have in mind?"

Be prepared with three numbers: your ideal salary number, a smaller number that you would still be happy with, and the minimum you are willing to accept before walking away. Creating a budget that takes into account all of your expenses and taxes may help you with this. Also be prepared to articulate, without bragging, why you feel you will bring more value to the organization than most candidates.

If the manager offers you a salary that is less than your ideal, let him or her know that based on your research, you've seen that the market rate in this city for comparable positions with similar organization is (state your ideal), and you were hoping they might be willing to make an offer at that level. Be sure your argument is based on facts; the manager is likely to know the going rate for the type of position. If your ideal number is much higher than the number the manager mentioned, it might be wise to ask for an amount between the two numbers instead.

If you've had a full-time job with a higher salary, or you've received offers during this search that were higher, let the employer know. Ask if it would be possible to match the best offer, or your last salary. Many employers will try to match another offer if they can.

From there, you are likely to get a sense of how much flexibility there will be. The manager will tell you if this is a set starting salary that is not negotiable. Or, he or she may agree to your figure, or offer you an amount between the two figures. Or, he or she may need to check with another party to see if it's possible to offer more money.

You will need to decide how to proceed based on your own financial needs and how much you want the job. Once you're getting a clear message that the last number offered is the final one, make a decision based on that number rather than pushing to negotiate further.

ONCE YOU'VE SETTLED ON A SALARY, BE SURE TO GET THE OFFER IN WRITING.

Other Negotiable Items

Keep in mind that it will not always be possible to negotiate for a higher salary. If the employer can't offer you more money, or if there are other terms of the job that you wish were slightly different, ask before making the final commitment to accept the position. Be sure to consider vacation time, health insurance and retirement packages, flex-time, or other benefits. Sometimes employers may be willing to negotiate extra vacation time (or will allow you to take some unpaid leave time if extra vacation is not possible). In the business world, employers may be able to offer a signing bonus, stocks or other incentives, or an early first performance review that will enable you to be eligible for raises or promotions soon if you do excellent work.

Negotiating Accommodations

Employers with at least 15 employees are required to provide reasonable accommodations for employees with disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act. It is the responsibility of the employee to request the accommodation. If you need accommodation for a disability, there is a useful article on the Job Accommodation Network at: <http://askjan.org/Eeguide/IIRequest.htm>

Negotiating Once You Have a Job

After you have started your job, there may still be times when you will want to negotiate. If and when you feel you deserve a raise, it is often okay to ask for one. If you are in doubt

about whether you should ask, do your research so that you will understand your value, and the market demand for positions like yours. If there are many qualified people currently seeking jobs like yours, asking for a raise may not be a great idea unless you can demonstrate that your performance is of truly exceptional value to the organization. If you have a skill set that is in high demand, and would be likely to have multiple offers if you began applying for a new job, you may be in a very good position to ask for a raise.