

Negotiating Offers

Job offers are always exciting to receive and require careful deliberation and evaluation. Never accept a job offer on the spot. Take some time to consider the details carefully and to make sure there are no unanswered questions in your mind. Remember that you are making an investment in an organization as much as it is investing in you. The following section will guide you through the various aspects of job offers that may be subject to negotiation. As you begin to negotiate, be clear on how much time you have to consider the offer and the date by when you must respond. When the negotiations are finished, put the entire agreement in writing.

Criteria for Evaluating an Offer

After all your effort looking for a job, you must now choose one. Even if you are offered one of your top choices, take some time to consider whether the position is right for you. This process is different for every position, but the following guidelines will help you make a thoughtful decision:

Is your initial interest in the organization still strong?
How will this position affect your future?
Is it consistent with your long-term goals?
Refer back to your initial impression of the interview; is there a “fit” between you and the organization?
Research the company further – are published reports consistent with your impressions?
How do current employees feel about their jobs?

Will you gain new skills at this job or bolster old ones?
Discuss the opportunity with previous employers, professors, mentors and family.
How will this position affect your personal relationships?
How does this job compare with your ideal? (Refer back to the sections on Lifestyle and Values.)

Think about the last time you had to evaluate a job offer. If you could make the decision again, based on the criteria described

Negotiating for Time

If you need more time than initially given to make your decision, or if you are interested in hearing from another company before you accept this offer, you can negotiate for more time. But keep the following caveats in mind.

Show Continued Interest. Never ask for an extension if you are not interested in the organization. This is unethical and keeps the organization from hiring another person by disrupting the hiring process. When you ask for an extension, emphasize that the extra time will help you be absolutely sure about your decision. Reiterate your interest and emphasize that your request does not reflect any negative feelings for the organization. Ask if you can continue to call them with any questions you have, and show continued interest. Be prepared to negotiate, but also be prepared for a possible negative answer. For further advice on negotiating, contact a career counselor.

Negotiate in Good Faith. Negotiate only if you are seriously considering accepting an offer. If you want to consider other organizations, contact those other employers immediately and inform them of your offer. If the employer has some flexibility and if they are strongly interested in you, they may speed up their decision. Make sure you have enough time to complete negotiations with all employers. Up to two weeks is considered reasonable, but you may have to make a decision before you have complete information on all possible job offers. You should accept an offer only if you intend to stick with it.

Starting Date

Companies with formal training programs usually have set starting dates. However, with many employers it is possible to negotiate a start date that is mutually acceptable. If you would like to take a vacation before starting or if you need to relocate, try to arrange for this before accepting the offer.

Section 10: Negotiating Offers (continued)

Salary

Employers often discuss salary before the official job offer, generally at the second or third interview, so you should be prepared to name your salary requirements and negotiate if necessary *after* the offer.

Estimating a Range. If the employer asks your salary requirements, give a realistic range for your field. A response that is too high or too low for that position will bring into question how informed you are about the position and the field. To arrive at a reasonable range, use the following guidelines:

Investigate current salary ranges for similar positions by talking with others in the field or with a career counselor. Know your own spending needs and the cost of living for the region in which you will be living. Know your fringe benefits, such as health insurance, vacations, policy regarding raises and bonuses, 401K plans and profit sharing. Excellent benefits may compensate for a less than ideal salary.

Negotiating for More Money. If you have been offered a position but are not satisfied with the salary, think about negotiating for more money. When you negotiate, you must feel comfortable about approaching the company with a new salary figure, and you should have a reasonable idea that the company will be flexible with its offer. (Many large training programs have set salary specifications.) Also, know what you are bargaining for. Is the salary too low for the city the company is in? Do you have previous experience to boost you above entry-level pay? Negotiate based on assets you bring to the organization, not on your financial needs.

Have a Positive Attitude. Do not take the negotiations personally and continue to express interest in the company. The central issue is negotiating in good faith. If you ask for more money and the organization meets this requirement, you must be prepared to accept the job offer. Otherwise, your reputation will be damaged. For further guidance, see a career counselor.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Job Search & Interviewing Advice

What Color Is Your Parachute? Published by Ten Speed Press.

The Complete Job Search Handbook: All the Skills You Need to Get Any Job and Have a Good Time Doing It. Published by Henry Holt and Company.

I Could Do Anything, If I Only Knew What It Was. Published by Delacorte Press.

Interview for Success: A Practical Guide to Increasing Job Interviews, Offers and Salaries. Published by Impact Publishers.

Interviewing: Effective Techniques to Help You Answer Tough Questions and Make a Great Impression. Published by John Wiley & Sons Publishing, National Business Employment Weekly.

Is That Your Best Offer? How to Negotiate a Higher Salary and More Perks. Published by Wet Feet Press.

Job Search Networking. Published by Bob Adams, Inc.

Job Smart. Published by Princeton Review.

Sweaty Palms: The Neglected Art of Being Interviewed. Published by Ten Speed Press.

Using the Internet in Your Job Search. Published by JIST Works.

Online Career Databases

HotJobs (www.hotjobs.com)

JobWeb (www.jobweb.org)

Job Search (www.jobsearch.about.com)

Monstertrak (www.monstertrak.com)

Fed World (www.fedworld.gov)

Idealist (www.idealists.org)

Human Rights Jobboard (www.hri.ca/jobboard)

Philanthropy (<http://philanthropy.com/jobs/>)

Wall Street Journal Business Careers (www.careers.wsj.com)