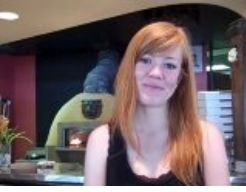


SALARY AND BENEFIT PRIORITIES CAN MAKE OR BREAK A JOB



When looking for a job, keep in mind that finding the best job is not always about finding the best salary. Many other factors are included in making a job the right one, and these are different for everyone. Before starting your job search, know what your priorities are. What benefits are an absolute must; which ones might make that perfect sounding job a very poor choice for you. Evaluating your needs and priorities may prevent you from regretting decisions you make as you search for job opportunities. The following workplace values should be considered before beginning your search.

Salary: Money may not be everything, but it is important. After all, those great benefits such as good health insurance aren't going to be very helpful in paying for your groceries. Determine how much money you need to make to pay bills, have some fun today, and save for tomorrow. Then, think about how much extra you need above providing for the basics in order to be truly happy. Once you have a figure in mind, use it to focus your job search. **Benefits:** While the size of the paycheck might be the most important for some, others place benefits higher on the list. Decide what benefits are necessary for you. Insurance is usually a benefit that ranks high in importance. Is it available and affordable? What about co-pays and networks? These are important questions to know the answers for when making a decision between jobs. **Family Factors:** How flexible do you need a company to be in regards to family concerns. Some companies are more family-friendly than others, and this is important to know if you have a family or are thinking of starting one. Day care options, flexible scheduling, and family leave options are all points to consider. Make sure you know what your needs are in this area. **Retirement:** If you are young, you may not even consider this an important area of benefit, but older workers usually will. Retirement benefits, stock options, profit sharing, and pensions are all aspects that may offset the need for a larger salary. How important are these options for your situation? **Location:** This may not sound like an important issue, but it can be a huge deal breaker. Where is the job located? Will you have to commute? What about parking? Pay attention to this factor when considering a job opportunity. Also, will travel be a part of your responsibilities? For some, this would not be possible and for others it would be an exciting prospect. **Time-Off:** Companies differ greatly in how vacation and holiday time is handled. Again, personal preferences will weigh in as to how important a factor time-off from work is. Some like to take a 2 week vacation while others enjoy shorter breaks throughout the year. Make sure the company you are considering has a time-off policy that matches your preferences.