

## CAN INTERNS HAGGLE OVER PAY?

**Summary:** Joe, a college junior, gets some advice about haggling over pay for an internship.



**Question:** I'm a junior in college doing an extensive internship search. I have good qualifications, but some companies aren't offering the wage I'm looking for. How do I ask for more as an intern?

— Joe, State College, Pa.

**Joe:** Determine, first, if what you're looking for and what you can command are in the same ballpark. An employer will establish a wage based on the perceived value of the candidate. Market forces and the established practices of the employer also will influence the rate. If what you're looking for doesn't mesh with these factors, it will be a tough sell. Conversely, if you believe you have unique qualifications to offer at a competitive price, let the bargaining process begin.

As with negotiating for a higher starting salary as part of a job offer, you're in a better position to talk numbers after the employer has expressed a solid interest in you as the top candidate. Up until that point, the employer has no psychological investment in you and may easily turn to a field of potential candidates to consider at the lower rate.

Once an offer has been extended, express your enthusiastic interest in the company and the internship. Reiterate your potential contributions, then explore the possibility of the higher rate you had in mind. Anticipating a counter to your counteroffer, you may want to suggest a rate that is actually a little higher than your goal. This is a fine line to walk. Remain positive and confident, but avoid appearing uppity. Prepare in advance for this conversation. Don't become defensive and box yourself into a corner. Keep the door open so that the decision of whether to accept or decline the offer remains with you.

Finally, as important as the wage may be, evaluate it within the context of the overall internship. A dynamic internship offering solid experience, a strong mentor and a connected network of contacts can pay big dividends in future opportunities.

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