

## HOW TO NEGOTIATE A JOB OFFER

**Job Negotiation: A Few Basics** First, you have to know when to start negotiations. You don't want to begin prematurely or wait too long because you may lose all of your leverage. For example, the interview is not the right time to pretend you are at the bargaining table. You also don't want to wait until you've already accepted the offer. Instead, begin negotiations once the offer is made. Make sure to get all of the details about what you are being offered so you can come up with a strong counter proposal. Second, you also need to remember that the foundation for effective job negotiation begins before the interview. For example, if you present yourself during the interview or even in your cover letter as desperate for a job, then you're less likely to get your future employer to budge on the offer. They know they have you where they want you. Also, there are some important questions to ask during the interview, such as what type of salary progression you can expect over the next couple of years and how often salary reviews are completed. When these issues are asked during the interview, you're more likely to get a straightforward answer. Finally, you should also make a point of finding out who has the final say on the employment decisions. Chances are the person doing the interview and making the offers isn't the decision maker. You want to determine who gets the final say because you can always take your counter offer directly to him or her if the need arises. Plus, the knowledge could give you some insight into the flexibility of the offer.

**Evaluating a Job Offer** Obviously, the first aspect of the job offer you'll consider is the salary. You may already have an idea in mind of how much you hope to earn per year, but make sure your idea is based on realistic expectations before you decide to accept or counter an offer. Thanks to the Internet you can now easily determine what is reasonable. For example, you can find online calculators and sites that will allow you to enter a job title and a zip code in order to get an estimate of what the pay for that position should be in that geographic area. In some cases, you can even add in specifics, such as your education and experience level, to get a more personalized salary response. While the information you gain from outside sources should give you a range of what to expect, you can always ask for more than the average in hopes of boosting your salary a little more. Of course, you should also have some idea of how much demand for the position there is in your city. When the competition for a certain job is fierce, you'll have less ability to ask for higher than average salaries. Of course, you also want to remember that salary is not the total package. Most job offers will also include certain benefits. Depending on where you are in your career and in your personal life, these benefits may seem more or less important. However, if you plan to stay with the same company for an extended period of time, these benefits are something worth giving serious consideration. A solid benefits package may include health insurance, vacation time, some type of retirement program, as well as other extras, including dependent care or tuition reimbursement. Before you begin a job search, you should make a list of the benefits that would be most desirable to you and your family. That will make it easier for you to evaluate a job offer when it arrives. **Making the Counter Offer** If you have evaluated the offer and decided to make a counter proposal, you should do so in writing. That doesn't necessarily mean you should mail the counter offer, though - a fax or email will do the job just as well and much faster. Make sure you have a clear idea of what you want. Do not simply say "Although I am still interested in working for you, I would need more money before accepting your offer." That type of vague request is not going to be taken seriously. Instead, you'll want to construct your offer so it is clear what you want and that you are a professional. The example below illustrates one way to phrase your offer effectively:

While I appreciate your offer and would welcome the opportunity to join your staff, I cannot accept the offer as is. However, if you were to increase the salary to \$55,000 per year and add an additional week of paid vacation time, I would happily accept the position.

Obviously, you would replace the details above with your own. **Following the Counter Offer** Before you make a counter offer, you need to realize what to be prepared for. First, the moment you make a counter offer you are essentially rejecting the initial offer. If the employer does not accept your proposal, you will have lost the position. You must be prepared for that outcome. However, the more likely outcome is that the employer will make an additional counter offer. For this reason, you should always ask for slightly more than you want in your own offer. For example, you might ask for \$55,000 when you really want only \$50,000. Once the company makes its offer, you'll need to repeat the process. If you do not hear from the employer after making the counter offer, you should follow-up to make sure your offer has been received. You do not want to sit back and wait because you may end up losing the initial offer as well. Remember that job negotiation is the only way to get the salary and benefits you deserve.

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