



EVALUATING AND NEGOTIATING JOB OFFERS GUIDE



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A. ASSESS THE SITUATION AND CONSIDER THE VARIOUS FACTORS

Determine Whether There Is Even Room for Negotiation. Government and nonprofit salaries are often not negotiable. Large firms typically work on salary schedules and will not deviate from them. Small and mid-size firms tend to have more flexibility. Conduct research prior to a job interview or discussing an offer and have a general salary range in mind before discussing salary. See Sections B, C and D below for additional details

Be Prepared, Research the Market and Know Your Worth. Geographic location, firm size and practice area all influence salary. Look at similar job postings, talk with friends at other firms, visit the Career Development Office (“CDO”) and utilize online resources. Know your qualifications and skills set so that you can market yourself accurately. If you can offer something unique to the employer, you are more likely to have success in your negotiations. See Sections B, C and D below for additional details.

Determine Your Lifestyle and Budget. Consider what you currently need to make ends meet. Consider your job-related expenses, such as parking, lunches and cost-of-living adjustments. Determine what you want versus what you need and what you will ultimately settle for in terms of a salary package.

Avoid Premature Disclosure. You should not commit to a specific figure until you have a better understanding of the job requirements and the employer's expectations. If pressed early on: 1) indicate you need to know more about the job requirements; 2) respond with a range; 3) shift the focus away from the salary to the topic of the job fit; or 4) say that you are flexible. If a posting asks for salary requirements, say that your salary requirements are reasonable and the salary is negotiable.

Evaluate the Benefits. There are other aspects of compensation to consider. Think about your particular priorities before entering salary negotiations. Other factors to consider are: 1) salary structure; 2) deferred compensation/retirement plans; 3) medical benefits; 4) life and disability insurance; 5) bonus structure; 6) billable hours; 7) vacations; and 8) miscellaneous factors (such as office location, parking and fees, potential for partnership and whether you are rewarded for cultivating business). See Section C below for additional details.

Think About the Value of the Job. If the initial offer is low, think about the value of the job in terms of improving your skills, broadening your work experience, building your resume and providing access to a particular professional network.

State Facts and Support Your Position. A potential employer is interested in what you can bring to the table. State the facts and support your position. Stay calm and professional, hold your ground and act confidently, but do not make the process adversarial. Remember that you are working toward a mutual goal. Show that you are confident and savvy, but not inflexible or unrealistic in your approach to negotiation. Know when to stop. Do not act in a confrontational manner. Do not make the employer think it was a mistake to make you a job offer in the first place.

Request Time To Think Over an Offer. Do not act impulsively and rush to accept an offer on the spot. Ask for time to consider the offer and do not let an employer push you into accepting an offer. Say that you need time to consider the offer and then decide whether you want to accept or make a reasonable counter-offer.

Request the Offer in Writing. Wait for all the terms to be stated, and clarify any areas which are unclear. Once you have discussed every aspect of the offer, ask for a letter outlining the salary and benefits to make sure that both parties agree on the same terms and those terms are memorialized. Make sure you accept the offer in writing.

B. OBTAIN SALARY INFORMATION

Here are some ways to obtain salary range information:

- First and foremost, ask other people in your field for their opinion. Obviously, you would not ask what anyone's specific salary is, but you can definitely discuss different figures and see how they respond. Do they think that the number you mention is about right, or does it seem too high or too low to them?
- Ask professional organizations in your industry. They often do periodic salary surveys they can share with you and even if they do not, they can sometimes provide general information about what range to expect.
- Review similar positions found on online job boards to see if salary ranges are listed.
- Look at government salaries, which are required by law to be publicly available. While they are not always a perfect parallel to private sector jobs, they can give you additional data to factor into your research.
- Research the various salary websites online for information. See Section D below.

C. CONSIDER OVERALL COMPENSATION PACKAGE

In addition to an annual salary, there are other factors which you should consider as part of an overall compensation package before you negotiate and or accept/reject a job offer. Here is a basic checklist you can use as a guideline for assessing a job offer and negotiating the best deal for you:

- **General Benefits:** Be sure to ask what the benefit package includes, assuming the prospective employer has not already made it clear.
- **Health and Dental Insurance:** Does the employer offer [health insurance](#)? Does the policy cover just you or eligible dependants also? How much of the premium does the employer pay?
- **Life Insurance Policy:** Does the employer provide options for a life insurance policy?
- **Retirement Plan:** Does the employer have a retirement plan and, if so, how is it structured? Who makes contributions? Are there any restrictions on accessing the funds in the retirement account? At what age can you begin receiving the benefits?
- **Vacations & Holidays/Sick & Personal Days:** How many paid holidays are offered? What is the vacation policy? Can unused vacation days be carried forward into the next year or be converted into cash? Does the company allow personal days or sick days? If so, how many, and under what circumstances?
- **Bonus and Profit Sharing:** Does the company offer any bonus or profit-sharing programs? What do you have to do to become eligible for these programs?
- **Signing Bonuses:** Will the company offer a [signing bonus](#)? Signing bonuses -- one-time payments given when an employee begins a new job -- are not offered to every candidate.
- **Performance and Salary Review:** Does the company have a policy about performance reviews and salary reviews? If so, how often? Are the opportunities for career advancement based on performance, seniority or both?
- **Relocation & Travel Reimbursement:** If the job requires moving, does the company offer [relocation assistance](#)? If the job requires travel, what is the company policy regarding reimbursable expenses?
- **Maternity/Paternity Leave:** What is the company policy regarding maternity leave or paternity leave?
- **Other Factors:** Some employers may also offer day care benefits and/or flex time.

D. SALARY LINKS

Avery Index (http://www.averyindex.com/cost_of_living.php)

Top city cost-of-living comparisons.

Economic Research Institute (“ERI”) (<http://www.erieri.com/Resources>)

Provides free compensation and job analysis resources.

(<http://salary-surveys.erieri.com/>)

Salary and compensation surveys and reports for over 400 benchmark jobs.

Findlaw (<http://www.infirmation.com/shared/insider/payscale.tcl>)

Firm salaries and other statistics charts.

Glass Door (<http://www.glassdoor.com/Salaries/index.htm>)

This free site provides salary and bonus information for specific jobs at specific companies.

Home Fair (<http://www.homefair.com/real-estate/salary-calculator.asp>)

Comparison of salaries in different cities.

Internet Legal Research Group (<http://www.ilrg.com/employment/salaries/>)

Salaries of legal professionals.

JobStar Central (<http://jobstar.org/tools/salary/index.php>)

Links and book recommendations intended to help in negotiations and online tools include the Salary I.Q. test at

<http://jobstar.org/tools/salary/sal-iq.php>.

NALP Salaries & Compensation (<http://www.nalp.org/salariescompensation>)

Information from the National Association for Law Placement Professionals.

PayCheck City (<http://www.paycheckcity.com>)

Offers tools to calculate take-home pay, gross pay, 401(k) information, bonuses, etc.

Payscale (<http://www.payscale.com>)

Compares your job profile to the salary and compensation packages of others.

Robert Half Legal Salary Guide (<http://www.roberthalf.com/legal/lawyer-salary-center>)

Offers a free, downloadable salary guide that is updated annually, salary calculator, trends and videos.

Riley Guide (<http://www.rileyguide.com/salguides.html>)

Salary guides and guidance.

Salary.com (<http://www.salary.com/index.htm>)

Articles on salaries in various fields, salary advice and a salary wizard.

Salary Expert (<http://www.salaryexpert.com>)

Contains access to extensive international compensation, cost of living calculator, education planning center, etc.

U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (<http://www.bls.gov/>)

Data on wages, unemployment and other employment trends.

U.S. Office of Personnel Management 2011 Salary Tables

(<http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/#url=2015>)

General Locality Pay Tables and other federal government salary information.

E. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, consider your bottom line. Think about the “basics”-those things without which you cannot even contemplate accepting an offer of employment. An example would be the minimum level of compensation needed to meet your financial obligations. Then, add your essential benefits. How important is health insurance? Do you need coverage for eligible dependents as part of the package? What other factors are most important to you? The commute? Hours? Make sure your list contains the bare minimum you can, and will, accept -- your personal bottom line.

However, your bottom line may rise or fall, depending on whether you have a job and how badly you need one. If you are employed and seeking a better opportunity, you can be more selective. If you have not been working for several, generating an income may be your top priority, in which case you may discover that not much evaluation is necessary.

GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR NEGOTIATIONS!

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