

Salary Negotiation

While there are many potential points of negotiation, salary is usually the primary issue. Keep in mind that any discussion of salary negotiation might reach the unacceptable range and put the offer at risk. So tread carefully through salary negotiation.

Many companies have a fairly tight (although not airtight) salary range at the entry level. If you are able to show extraordinary educational or work experience, you may be able to extend the top end of the scale. Yet the magnitude of salary differentials will always be smaller at the entry level than at higher-level positions. So do not get carried away, even if you have multiple offers in hand.

When discussing salary, always state that you are "hoping" for more, instead of "expecting" more. Companies are always more willing to fulfill your hopes than your expectations. And keep your personal budgetary needs out of the equation. Having a larger personal budget does little to inflate your worth from a company perspective.

To better establish the acceptable range for the position, ask what the hiring range and pay range is. Most larger companies will have set ranges to work within, although many medium to smaller companies may have more flexible market-driven ranges. Following are some sample questions to ask in salary negotiations:

"What is the salary range for the position?"

"What is the hiring salary range for the position?"

"Do you ever pay higher than that range? If so, for what reason?"

"What is the average increase being given? After one year? Two years? Three?"

"How often is the employee reviewed? For performance? Salary?"

In attempting to modify salary, you may find that the best you can achieve is a promise for tomorrow. If so, be sure to get it in writing from a person with authority to make it stick.

And in the end, do not let salary be your only guide. You are much better off making \$30,000 a year and happy than \$50,000 a year and miserable. The money will take care of itself over time when you are doing work that you love.

The Friendly Advice Technique

What do you do if you find yourself attempting to negotiate with someone who does not have the authority to negotiate or make changes? Do not attempt to negotiate, just simply ask for their advice. "What would you recommend . . . ?" or "How would you recommend . . . ?" questions will allow you to seek the individual's advice and counsel, without putting them in the uncomfortable position of not being able to respond.

Take careful notes of the steps you are recommended to follow. Even though the individual may not have a great deal of personal authority, they may be willing to give you the keys to

unlocking some of the doors in negotiating. These answers are being given to you without cost. Yet the value and payback can be substantial.

Relocation Expenses—Yours or Theirs?

Typically yours. Don't even think about getting into the higher-level relocation perks at the entry level. The best you can hope for is that they will pay for the cost of a U-haul or Ryder truck rental and/or your mileage in getting to your new location. Beyond that, you are likely on your own. Full-service movers, house buy-outs, realtor fees, mortgage buy-downs, and other perks will be out there for you in five-plus years. Until that time, everything but the most basic moving and relocation expenses will likely be yours.

Making Your Final Commitment

In the end, you will need to make a commitment. It should be a commitment that you are willing to stand behind. Companies spend money, commit resources, allocate training time, and shape schedules around your commitment. In addition, they will also be sending the "Dear John/Dear Jane" letters out to all of the "second-place" finishers. So make sure you are willing to stand behind your commitment.