

NEGOTIATING BENEFITS

Whenever possible, try to delay the discussion of salary until the employer offers you the job. This is the period in which you have the most leverage! Research is essential if you are to emerge from the negotiation process with the benefits and pay you desire.

There are a variety of resources to help you determine salary ranges for a wide range of industries and occupations that will provide you with a framework for negotiating. See if you can discover the salary levels at the specific companies or organizations in which you are interested. It is important also that you analyze your financial obligations: rent/mortgage, car payments, loans, etc. to determine the salary you must have to pay your bills.

If you have little work experience and/or if you are applying for an entry-level job, keep in mind that you may not have a good deal of room to negotiate. Many companies set predetermined pay and benefit levels for lower-level positions. However, do not underestimate your worth. Be aware of what a similar position pays at another company or organization. Avoid settling for a salary or compensation package that is not comparable to what other companies offer.

Even if you're reasonably sure you're going to accept the offer, it is usually wise to ask for a day or two to consider your decision. This gives you time to carefully evaluate the merits of this particular position.

Once you and your employer have agreed upon a final employment offer, request this transaction in writing. This will avoid having to conduct any future re-negotiations!

CONTEMPLATING A JOB OFFER

After working hard to find a job, you can become more selective when you receive a job offer. Your salary and benefits, although important, are not the only areas to consider when determining if a job is the right one for you. It is best to choose a job that will boost your career goals and help you to advance further in your career field. There are four areas of focus when contemplating a job offer:

The Job Itself

- Will I get along with my boss (es)? Will I get along with my co-workers?
- What is the company's management style?
- Do I have a full understanding of what my work would entail?
- Do I find the position interesting and challenging?
- What are the usual hours of the job? Is it necessary to work nights? Weekends?
- Is there any travel involved with the position? If so, how much? Where?
- Will I need to relocate? Where?
- Will I need more training? Who will pay for it?
- Is the job reasonably secure?

Career Advancement/Development

- Could this job lead to a promotion?
- What type of background am I building? Will this job broaden my experience and make me more marketable to future employers?
- Will this job help to advance my career, even if it is not my "ideal job" now?

The Organization

- What is the structure of the organization like? Does it allow room to advance, or will I need to go to another company to be promoted?
- What are the company's policies regarding sick leave, vacations, cause for dismissal, and so forth?
- Is the company growing? How is its financial position?
- What is the employee turnover rate?
- Is the location convenient to me?
- Is the physical setting of the company acceptable?
- How is the firm known for treating its employees? Are they generally satisfied with the organization?

Financial Considerations

- Is the salary competitive? If not, is it possible to get an early review and an increase before one year?
- Do I clearly understand how I will be paid? (Salary, hourly wage, wage and bonuses, and so forth.)
- How are raises determined?
- What benefits does the company offer? Insurance (health, dental, life)? Free parking? Time off (vacations, holidays, sick leave)? A retirement plan?
- Are any additional but less common company benefits offered? For instance, does the company offer a company car, expense account, employer-paid tuition for college, travel to conferences/conventions, memberships in professional organizations, and profit sharing or stock purchasing programs?