Negotiating a Job Offer
Matching Your Experience with Compensation

Negotiation is a process where you and an employer come to a mutual agreement about the terms of your employment or your compensation package. Every job seeker can negotiate, but not every job seeker should negotiate. When deciding what is right for you, it is important to first have a clear understanding of your “market value.” Consider what skills, knowledge, and experience you offer an employer, then consider how your profile satisfies the needs of the organization.

Successful Negotiation:

1. Research (Career Field Compensation)

First, you want to determine what your offer is worth, and any additional expenses you might have. Knowledge of the position, its requirements, and the organization will help you place value on the offer. The following resources can assist you with researching aspects of an offer:

- Career Field Starting Salaries: PayScale
- Location-Specific Cost of Living: MyMove
- Federal & State Taxes (to calculate monthly take home pay)
- Create a Budget (visit MoneySmarts to learn more)

2. Evaluate (Aspects of a Offer)

Many organizations do not negotiate entry salaries, however, negotiations can focus on many aspects of an offer. Health and retirement plans are usually standard for all employees, but (generally speaking) the following aspects of an offer are potentially negotiable:

- Salary
- Location
- Relocation Expenses
- Start Date
3. Negotiate

How you negotiate, rather than simply what you say when you negotiate, may make the difference when an employer decides on a final job offer. If you conduct yourself with confidence, realism, and grace as you present your research, you will be far more persuasive than if you lacked an understanding of industry standards and organizational resources. Simple and direct inquiries tend to yield the best results.

The employer should be the first to introduce the topic of compensation. Once this topic is broached, however, you should feel free to inquire about various aspects of the compensation package. These following tips can help you prepare your negotiation delivery:

**Strike when the iron is hot-- when an employer has decided you are essential to the organization and has offered you a position. Discuss a desirable decision date with your employer, so you have time to investigate the offer.**

**If possible, negotiations should be communicated in person or over the phone, and followed up with in writing. A written record is more binding, and allows you to examine both the salary and benefits.**

### Example Negotiation Deliveries

**Negotiation Topic: Relocation Costs**

**Scenario:** You have been offered a full time position across the country, and will need to end your lease early, and pay to move all your furniture and belongings to your new city. After careful research, you have determined this will cost more money than you have, and will be making in the first few months on the job.

**Example Preparation:** Assess relocation expenses by considering gas prices, moving company fees or similar fees, travel time to the new city, lease termination fees, and security deposits for a new living arrangement. Outline this budget concisely to present to an employer.

**Example Script:** “After researching moving costs, and creating a budget for relocating to your city, I’ve realized that financially I will be struggling to cover expenses the first few months of my employment. Would it be possible for me to receive reimbursement, in addition to my starting salary, to cover relocation costs?”

**Negotiation Topic: Starting Salary**

**Scenario:** You have been offered two full time positions in your career field. After careful consideration, Firm A matches your career objectives and values closer than Firm B; however, Firm B offers a significantly more competitive salary.

**Example Preparation:** Research entry level salaries for your career field; factor in the location of each job offer and cost of living. Compare Firm A and Firm B’s offers to the average salary. Outline this research concisely to present to Firm A.

**Example Script:** “Thank you so much for offering me a position at Firm A! I have received a few other offers, which seem to match average compensation in this career field, while Firm A’s offer is lower. Would we be able to negotiate my starting salary, or an incentive/retention bonus?”