

Negotiating Job Offers

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Objectives

1. Recognize the importance of negotiation.
2. Demonstrate appropriate negotiating behaviors.
3. Identify factors involved in career decisions.
4. Engage in follow-up behaviors after accepting or declining a job offer.

Activities

These activities can help you achieve the stated objectives.

- Read through this guide to understand the dynamics of negotiating a job offer.
- Use the employment decision-making exercise.
- Refer to the many additional negotiating job offer resources available at The Career Center.
- Attend a *Negotiating Job Offers* workshop offered by The Career Center. Check with Career Center staff or www.career.fsu.edu for dates and times.
- Ask Career Center staff about issues to consider when negotiating a job offer to match your needs.

Points in Negotiating Job Offers

Importance of Negotiating a Job Offer

Once you have received a job offer, you have more “power” than at any other time in the interviewing process. Aside from the main goal of making the right decision, much can be gained or lost from the way you negotiate your offer.

Characteristics of Receiving a Job Offer

Time

An offer can arrive anywhere from one day to six weeks after your second or third interview. Occasionally employers will give you the offer at their final interview.



Impressions Still Count

Continue to make a good impression when the offer arrives. Let employers know you are pleased to receive an offer, but don't let them hear you announce to your roommate that you got the job. On the other hand, don't make a negative impression with employers by telling them how sought after you are and how many other offers you have received.

Recognize the Uniqueness of Each Negotiation

Sometimes you will have skills to offer employers which are in high demand. Negotiation will be easier in these situations. At other times, your offer is one of many with other candidates waiting in the wings if you do not accept the offer. Also, the economy and labor market demand can determine whether your offer is negotiable or not. Know the situation and be prepared to justify your request if you are not in a high demand field.

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Clarify the Offer

Be clear on all the factors that make up the offer. Get the following information before you get off the phone with the employer:

- Salary
- Location
- Reporting date
- Relocation expenses offered
- Signing bonus (if any)
- When they need your answer

Negotiate Time of Decision

Do not accept the job offer on the spot. Although you may have been considering the possible offer, you need time to evaluate all the factors of this decision. Remember not to be “star struck” by the excitement of the offer. Determine a reasonable length of time to make your decision (a few days to a week), and be ready to give the employer this time frame when you receive an offer. Employers know you are interviewing with other organizations and will appreciate your being honest and careful about your decision.

Factors That May Be Negotiated

Remember you have nothing to negotiate until you have an offer. Once you receive an offer, it is important that you consider all possible factors.

Salary, to certain limits

The offered salary may or may not be negotiable and it may or may not be a fair offer. Prior to negotiating this factor, research salaries offered in your field by geographical location, experience, degree level, major, and previous offers. You will often find that the salary an employee receives varies greatly by job, employer, and region of the country.

Location of position

There are many differences between working in various cities. Take the time to check out the geographic area of your new position. Does the community offer you the lifestyle you are looking for? Do you have the option to choose the location of the job? With some positions, negotiating where you will live can make the difference in accepting a job or not.

Reporting date

Depending on the organization and your job, some employers might be able to offer a flexible starting date. If you have ever dreamed of backpacking or cycling through Europe, now may be the time. Maybe you just want to take some time off to relax. Now is the opportunity to negotiate when you will begin your new job.

Performance reviews

Some employers may give bonuses for job performance. Often, these salary increases are attached to your performance reviews. If the organization incorporates this type of appraisal system, it might be possible to ask for an earlier review to increase your earnings more quickly.

Relocation expenses and signing bonuses

Some employers may provide relocation benefits to help you move to the community where the employer is located. This may include travel to the community to look for a home or apartment, mortgage assistance, cost of moving possessions and vehicles, and/or hotel and food expenses until you are settled. It also may be in the form of a signing bonus, which is simply an agreed upon amount of money given to you at the time of your acceptance of the offer. If an employer does not present these benefits, you might want to consider negotiating for them.

Desired division or department

In general, not all jobs are created equal within an organization. Find out as much as possible about your options before you accept an offer. If you decide that certain divisions appeal to you more than others, let it be known before you sign. Your specific work assignment might be a factor that can be negotiated.

Making the Best Decision

Making the best decision involves a host of factors. It might involve visiting the Career Center to learn more about effective decision making. At the very least, you should look at job offers as they relate to your individual, family, and career goals.

Individual needs and goals

Does this job match your interests, values, skills, and beliefs? Does it provide you with the lifestyle, prestige, independence, creativity, security, altruistic, and economic returns you are looking for in a job?

Family goals

Does this job accommodate your needs and lifestyle preference with regard to your family? Is the geographical location conducive to you and your family's hobbies, community activities, and social support groups?

Career goals

Is the nature of the employer, the job's pay and benefits, and the work activities what you are looking for in a job? What is the employer's reputation? Is the training program attractive and comprehensive? Does the organization provide advancement and mentoring opportunities? Will you be given significant responsibility? Are the surroundings and people pleasant? Is there job security? Does it offer professional, personal, and educational growth? Is the salary adequate for your needs? How does the benefit package compare to those of other employers?

Use effective decision making

It is suggested that you evaluate each offer based on the same set of factors to determine which one best meets your needs. Only you can decide which factors are important. What is important to one person isn't necessarily important to someone else. The Career Center has a sample employment decision-making exercise that can help you in evaluating and comparing offers.

Negotiating the Offer

Once you have decided on an offer to accept, you will need to take the following steps to ensure an effective negotiation.

Decide your conditions

It is important to determine what you want from the offer, but it is also important to know the minimum you will take from an offer. Create a plan that will allow flexibility. For example, if you ask for more salary but the organization cannot offer more money, would you be willing to take a signing bonus instead? Remember, you only have one opportunity to get the most from this offer so thoroughly plan prior to any negotiation.

Negotiate with one organization

Only negotiate with one organization at a time. Don't spend time and energy negotiating with the organization that is your second or third choice until it is clear that your first choice is no longer an option.

Negotiate from a point of power

Two strategies are typically used to negotiate effectively. The first involves going to the employer with a competing offer from another organization. Having a higher competing offer for the same type of position within the same industry is an effective negotiation strategy. Never lie - employers communicate with each other. Secondly, you can present the employer with research about salaries in the field and cost of living and/or market demand for your credentials. Research that includes these items will give you a stronger position from which to negotiate. Just make sure your statistics accurately represent your background and the type of job being sought.

Regardless of which strategy you choose, focus on the total package. Look for creative ways to achieve your objective.

Call early

If you make your decision early, by all means call the organization and begin negotiations. The earlier you negotiate, the more likely that the organization has not filled all of its positions and could be more inclined to negotiate with you. Remember to maintain credibility and professionalism.

Maintain your professionalism

Many candidates make the mistake of becoming too casual after they've received an offer. Remember, the person you are negotiating with may be your supervisor or your colleague.

Make a decision

Be prepared to make a decision once the organization has stated its final offer. It is not appropriate to try to hold out for more time or another offer.

Commit fully

Once you reach a decision, let your employer know that you're with them 100 percent. No one wants someone to work for them who acts like they would rather be somewhere else.

The Final Step: Put it in Writing

Decline letters

Declining an offer should be done in writing and as soon as you accept another position. This is an important step because you may need this contact later on, so never burn your bridges.

Acceptance letters

Acceptance letters are extremely important in restating your understanding of the offer. Remember to include the following:

- Salary
- Starting date and time
- Location
- Any perks, signing bonuses, etc. that you negotiated
- Any other factors that you feel were vague or were not in writing

The bottom line in negotiating a job offer is finding a career that meets your values, abilities, and interests and compensates you at the level of your expertise. Negotiating a job offer may be scary, but if done in a professional way, can result in a better job package to start your career.

Selected Salary Resources

(Available at the Career Center and/or online):

- National Association of Colleges and Employers Salary Survey
www.career.fsu.edu/stats/nacelinknational.cfm
- *The American Almanac of Jobs and Salaries*
- The FSU Employment/Salary Survey
www.career.fsu.edu/stats
- *Occupational Outlook Handbook*
www.bls.gov/oco/
- www.salary.com
- www.rileyguide.com/salary.html



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